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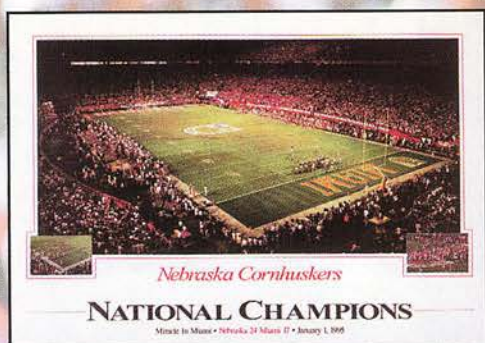
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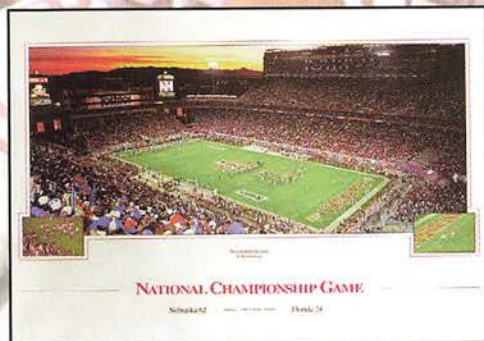


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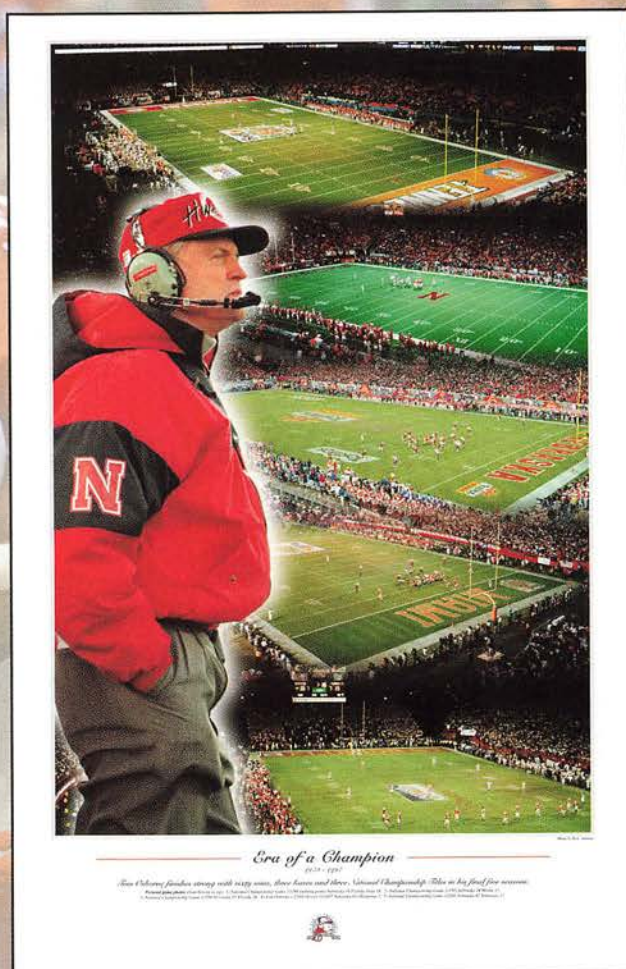
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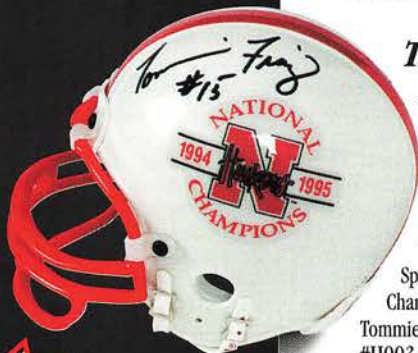
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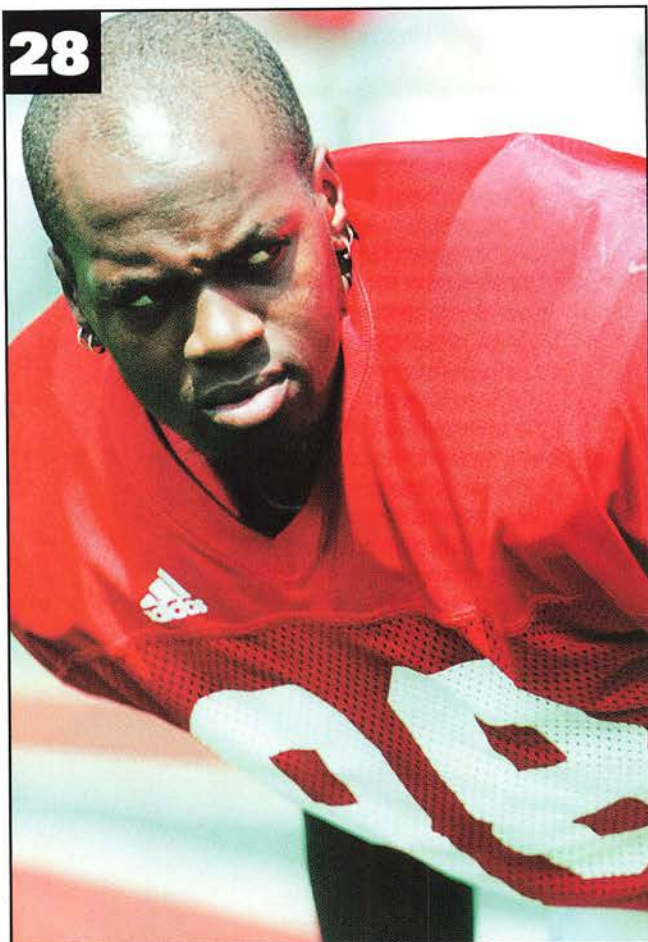
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Being voted as a captain by your peers at Nebraska signifies more than just an honor — it is a responsibility.
By Mike Babcock

32 Ben Gessford

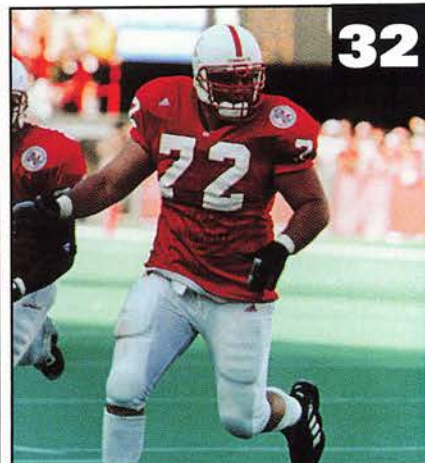
Through determination and perseverance, Ben Gessford earned a scholarship, a starting spot and most importantly, respect.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Wanted: Predictions

As always, your magazine is excellent. However, I want to make a recommendation. In my August 1998 magazine, I noted that the "Scouting Louisiana Tech" section didn't have writers predicting the score of the upcoming game. Simply put, this portion of your magazine was the single, best portion of your entire magazine. Please bring it back in a hurry.

Craig P. Fagan, Esq.
San Diego, Calif.

Too Much Passing

Saturday's defeat of Louisiana Tech was a disappointment, not because of LaTech's passing yardage against us, but because of Solich's play calling. As a Nebraska fan, I found it blasphemous to see Bobby Newcombe take a five step drop and pass the ball on more than a couple of plays. That is not Nebraska football. They should continue to concentrate on running the ball up the middle, around and through defenders, and do some play action. Although Buckhalter did break one for 43 yards in the fourth quarter, he should have done that earlier. They should continue what Osborne has instilled in the patient running game, picking away at defenses. They should leave that passing stuff to Colorado (and we all see how far that passing game has gotten them... nowhere). How effective is a passing game going to be in November when it's snowy and windy? Also, run blocking offensive linemen will wear down defenses quicker than pass protecting offensive linemen. Maybe Buckhalter would have gotten that 43-yarder earlier if they were more consistent in the run. Rushing for under 300 yards will not win a national championship! Maybe I'm being sentimental because I don't see Osborne on the sidelines. Or maybe I'm not.

TVV
New York, NY
via e-mail

Turn 'Em Loose

I think we can expect a little bit of rust and opening-game jitters, even from the Cornhuskers. Even with the pressure of defending a national title and playing their first game of the year, Nebraska still

put up 56 points while walking over Louisiana Tech. Now the ice has been broken and the Huskers have that first game under their belts and are ready to defend their title. Now they can relax and turn it loose on everybody else who gets in their way.

Byron Jacobs
Omaha, Neb.



What's Going On?

What happened to Nebraska's secondary? They allowed nearly 600 yards of passing offense and gave up an NCAA record 405 yards to Troy Edwards. Sure, the guy is an excellent receiver, but come on. It's not as if the coaches didn't know that Tim Rattay was going to put the ball up all day.

Edwards shouldn't have been a surprise, either. He was a finalist for the Biletnikoff Award last season. It would make sense to double team their best player. The coaches should have clued in to that after Edwards had about 200 yards. The defensive line didn't look very good either. They put next to no pressure on Rattay and gave him all day to dissect the defense. Some serious adjustments need to be made immediately or Nebraska will not even win the division championship, much less the national title.

Stanley Greenleaf
Lincoln, Neb.

Great Coverage

In my opinion, one of the best things about football season is that I get an issue of *Huskers Illustrated* every week instead of every two weeks. The photos really capture the emotions of the game. The in-depth articles and features almost makes me feel like I am in the locker room. (A locker room scented scratch and sniff pad would do it, but that would be going a little too far.) The pre-game assessments are always right on the money. Even Lee Corso and Kirk Herbstreit can't match you guys. Keep it up.

James L. Dolby
Madison, Wisc.

Got Something To Say?

Please send your comments and questions to: Letters, P.O. Box 83222, Lincoln, Neb. 68501. Or fax them to us at (972) 851-1720. We reserve the right to edit the letters for clarity, content and length. For those with electronic mail abilities, huskersedit@sportscom.com.

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Feel The MADNESS

Whether it's in front of a television watching professional wrestling or cracking heads as a linebacker and special teams headhunter, Ben Buettenback is not afraid to go a little crazy

Scott Bruhn

Feel the "Macho Madness." Oh, yeah. And if you aren't familiar with the concept, well, ask **Ben Buettenback**, Nebraska's junior middle linebacker, for an explanation.

Buettenback is a fan of the creator of the Madness, **Randy "Macho Man" Savage**, the snap-into-a-Slim-Jim guy currently employed by **Ted Turner's World Championship Wrestling**. Oh, yeah.

The Macho Man "will take on anybody," Buettenback said. "He doesn't care who you are. The Giant's supposed to be one of the biggest, baddest guys. And he'll just go up and attack the Giant. He doesn't care. He's supposed to be one of the most dangerous guys in wrestling."

"He's pretty much crazy. He's not the biggest guy. He just goes nuts."

Buettenback might just as well have been describing himself. At 5-foot-11 and 210 pounds, he's not the biggest guy, particularly for a middle linebacker. And he goes a little nuts when he gets on the football field, figuratively speaking. "The pads are a great equalizer, pretty much," he said.

"You put a helmet on. You put pads on. Those 300-pounders, they're not so big anymore. It's pretty much



running into them with all you can, taking it to them instead of letting them take it to you."

That philosophy has served him well and helps explain how such a modest-sized athlete could walk on and earn two letters at Nebraska playing at linebacker, as well as on the kicking teams.

He's on the punt return team, and he was on the kickoff team as a wedge-breaker — what else? But the Cornhuskers went into the season with a different philosophy of covering kickoffs.

"They're (the coaches) doing something different because they said hardly anybody does the wedge anymore. They're doing

side returns, so they want the faster guys," Buettenback said.

Buettenback, a biological sciences major who has twice earned honorable mention on the Academic All-Big 12 team, relaxes by watching professional wrestling on television.

Given the demands of school and football, "the only break I have is watching wrestling," said Buettenback. "That's about it. And sometimes I've got to cut that short."

But only sometimes. His roommates accept the fact that on most Monday nights the television will be tuned to wrestling. "They pretty much know when I'm there, we'll watch," Buettenback said. ■

Random QUOTES

"I miss the direct association with the running backs on a daily basis. I enjoyed that immensely, and I'll miss being a full-time coach on the field."

"I will still work with Dave (Gillespie) in the running backs part of practice. I'll sit in on the quarterback meetings. But to say I've got a group of athletes there that are just mine, and to be on the field working specifically with a group of athletes, I'll miss that."

— **Frank Solich** on being a head coach

"I think I could have spent my whole summer going different places, looking at how different coaches organize things, how they're structuring practices, how they're trying to motivate their players, how they're doing this and that."

"But I chose, really, to spend my time working on football from the standpoint of our offense versus the opponents' defenses, and our defense versus the opponents' offenses."

"I thought my time would be best spent there. Now if a lot of things collapse on me, maybe I'll make a lot of phone calls (to consult with other coaches). I'm not sure on that."

Solich did talk briefly with Colorado's **Rick Neuheisel** at a Big 12 coaches' meeting.

Solich said he asked Neuheisel "very casually . . . how it went for him when he first started, anything he wanted to throw my way. We had a very short conversation there."

— **Solich** on how he prepared for his first season as head coach

TCU Backs Out Of Agreement

Nebraska was supposed to open the 2000 and 2001 seasons with games against TCU, the first at Memorial Stadium and the second at Fort Worth with the Horned Frogs returning to Lincoln for a third and final game in the series in late September of 2002. That was the agreement, anyway.

But **Charley North**, TCU's director of football operations, opted out of the series, explaining that the Horned Frogs football program is trying to rebuild under new head coach **Dennis Franchione** and playing Nebraska doesn't fit well in a rebuilding plan. "Don't get any ideas that we're afraid of anyone," North told the *Lincoln Journal Star*. "We're just trying to do what's in the best interests of this school."

What's good for TCU isn't good for the Cornhuskers, who have been dropped from the schedules of Northern Illinois, Utah State, Houston, Nevada-Las Vegas and Temple in recent seasons.

"You think you have agreed to a deal, and then schools change coaches and change athletic directors, and things go sideways," said Bill Byrne, Nebraska athletic director.

Byrne is now trying to find non-conference opponents for the three seasons.

Byrne said Nebraska would waive the \$100,000 penalty for breaking the contract because TCU athletic director **Eric Hyman** indicated the Horned Frogs would play the three games in later seasons.

The Cornhuskers have home-and-home non-conference series with Iowa beginning at Iowa City next season, Notre Dame beginning at South Bend in 2000 and Penn State beginning at State College in 2002. ■



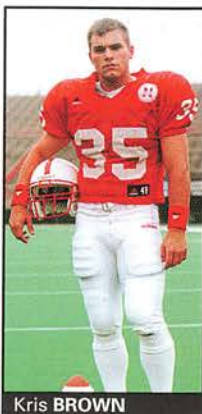
Nebraska took a lot of heat for playing teams such as Akron and Central Florida last year, but when schools like TCU drop off the schedule, finding quality additions late is a difficult task.

Professor Osborne

As first-year head coach **Frank Solich** was holding his first weekly news conference on the Tuesday prior the Louisiana Tech game, former coach **Tom Osborne** met with his Coaching Football class for the first time in the auditorium on the second floor of the South Stadium office building.

Among the 50 students who registered for the class was senior place-kicker **Kris Brown**.

In typical Osborne fashion, there was little fanfare as he began the session with, "We're going to go ahead and get started," Brown said. ■



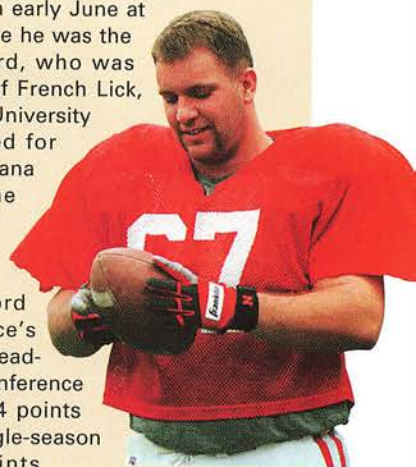
Kris BROWN

QUICK HITS

What's Happening In Nebraska Athletics?

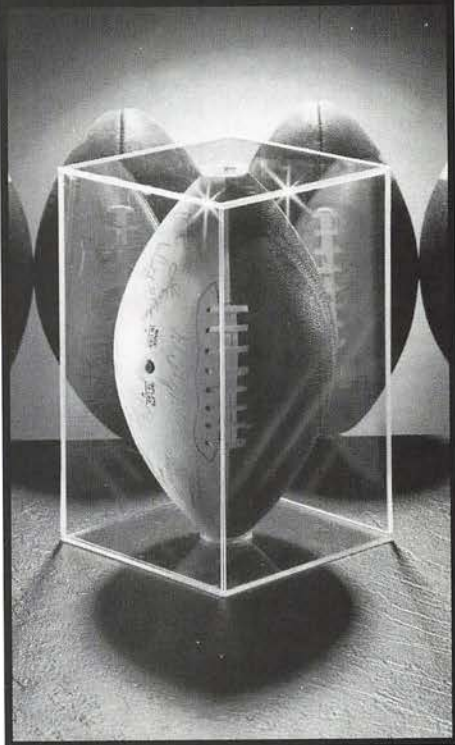
Cornhusker basketball center **Venson Hamilton** averaged 9.5 rebounds and 11 points in six games for a Big 12 all-star team that played in England, France and Belgium during the summer. Hamilton shot 26-of-38 from the field for a team-best .684 percentage. The team, coached by Texas Tech's **James Dickey**, won four of the six games. Sophomore forward **Chad Johnson** played on a team that toured Germany.

... **Rodney Fields**, a junior transfer from Tyler (Texas) Junior College, underwent surgery for a stress fracture in his right leg and might end up sitting out the 1998-99 season as a red-shirt. **Todd Smith**, a redshirt freshman guard, had stress fractures in both lower legs last season. ... **Claude Retherford**, among the first to be inducted into the Nebraska Basketball Hall of Fame, died in early June at his home in Tulare, Calif., where he was the mayor. He was 72. Retherford, who was from **Larry Bird's** hometown of French Lick, Ind., transferred from Indiana University to Nebraska, where he played for coach **Harry Good**, also an Indiana transplant. Retherford led the Cornhuskers in scoring for three seasons and finished as the school's career-scoring leader. The 6-foot-3 Retherford was the Big Seven Conference's Most Valuable Player in 1949, leading the league in scoring in conference games with an average of 12.4 points per game. He set a school single-season record by scoring 311 points. ... Nebraska's annual Photo Day attracted an estimated 7,500 autograph seekers on a hot and humid Saturday the week before the opener in the Eddie Robinson Classic. ... Former Cornhusker offensive guard **Aaron Taylor**, last season's Outland Trophy winner, was cut by the Indianapolis Colts in late August, but he was immediately picked up by the Chicago Bears. Taylor was a seventh round draft pick of the Colts. ... **Alik Tillery**, a redshirt freshman I-back from Brussels, Belgium, is sidelined indefinitely because of a dislocated elbow, suffered in a scrimmage during two-a-day practices. ... It's reasonable to expect Nebraska to play in one of the four bowls in the Bowl Championship Series (Fiesta, Orange, Sugar and Rose), either as the Big 12 champion or as an at-large entrant. For the conference teams that finish down the line, the bowl opportunities might be slightly more limited than they have been in recent seasons. Because of the breakup of the Western Athletic Conference, the Holiday Bowl and the Aloha Bowl have voided contracts with the Big 12. The WAC also was involved in those contracts, and its restructuring allowed the two bowls to void all contracts and start anew. As a result, the Big 12 has had to go back to the negotiating table. Holiday Bowl executive director **John Reid** told the *Omaha World-Herald* that the Holiday Bowl wasn't dissatisfied with the Big 12, which had been sending its No. 3 team to San Diego. "The only thing we're trying to do is to improve our position in relation to the Cotton Bowl," he said. The Cotton Bowl has an agreement to take the Big 12's No. 2 team, assuming a second conference team doesn't get an at-large bid under the Bowl Championship Series arrangement. The Big 12 will continue to send teams to the Alamogordo Bowl in San Antonio and the Insight.com Bowl in Tucson. ■



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BIG 12 NEWS

Notes And Quotes From Around The League

WELCOME TO THE BIG TIME, KANSAS STATE

K-State fans circled Nov. 14th as the day for the Wildcats' coming out party. Cat backers figured a victory over Nebraska the second Saturday of November would be legitimate proof their heroes deserved a spot on college football's national stage.

NCAA officials, however, had a different date in mind — Aug. 26. That's when the suits from Overland Park, Kan., stopped by Manhattan to drop a bomb on coach **Bill Snyder** and slapped a four-game suspension on junior college transfer running back **Frank Murphy**. That's cool, thought K-State, which had recommended Murphy be suspended two games for the questionable purchase of an automobile.

But the sleuths in suits were just getting warmed up. They stunned K-State's athletic administration by announcing the Wildcats' football program had been issued an official NCAA inquiry into a possible major violation.

Now that's big time. Just ask Oklahoma, Notre Dame, Alabama, Florida... the list goes on and on. Those football factories can tell the Wildcats it's time to get the willies when the NCAA starts tossing around terms like "official inquiry" and "major violation."

The probe centers on how Murphy obtained \$3,200 to buy a 1985 BMW. Reports indicate the cash came from several K-State boosters when Murphy was attending Garden City (Kan.) Community College, where he rushed for 1,370 yards and 26 touchdowns last season.

A 13-year-old Beemer? Gee, if you're going to get busted, Frank, why not go for the gold? Like a 1998 Cadillac, for goodness sakes.

"I made a serious error in judgment by accepting what is considered an unauthorized benefit," Murphy said. "I deeply regret any burden which I have brought to my family, to Kansas State University, to the community of Manhattan, to our football program and its great fans."

WHAT'S THE BIG WORRY?

Thanks to Snyder's penchant to cook up a schedule of nonconference cupcakes, Kansas State should survive Murphy's four-game absence just fine, thank you. Murphy's mother could probably gain 100 yards a game against three of the Cats' first four foes — Indiana State, Northern Illinois and Northeast Louisiana.

It's the fourth opponent, Texas on Sept. 19th in an ABC televised Big 12 opener, that the Wildcats might miss Murphy.

Perhaps they won't, if you believe **Mack Brown**. Texas' new coach is concerned about the defensive unit he inherited from predecessor **John Mackovic**.

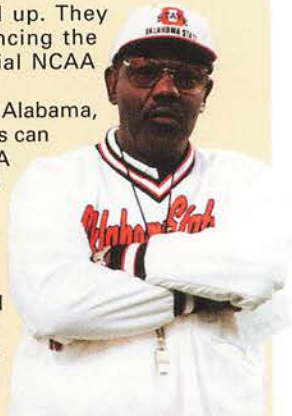
Brown said UT is taking precautions in camp to protect **Ricky Williams**, the Horns' Heisman Trophy candidate, by not allowing the Texas defenders to tackle Williams. "The sad thing is," Brown said, "we don't have a lot of guys who could take him (Williams) to the ground if we let them. So it (tackling) is not a big issue."

SHORT SHOTS

• Oklahoma State coach **Bob Simmons** has apparently tired of questions about his health. Simmons, who underwent a successful kidney transplant operation last March, said it when asked how he was feeling by Big 12 media members: "I feel fine. I'm running 200 miles a day and swimming around the lake."

• Missouri coach **Larry Smith** isn't sure how standout quarterback **Corby Jones** will react this season after suffering a tragic blow this summer. Jones' father, Tigers' assistant coach **Curtis Jones**, died of heart attack in July. "It's pretty hard to predict how the season will go for him," Smith said. "He's come into camp and I think football has been good therapy for him and helped him heal. But it's something that you don't get over overnight, so we're just going day-by-day."

• Everybody thought Colorado coach **Rick Neuheisel** was pretty hip when he took his players on white-water rafting trips and other excursions his first two seasons as head coach and CU posted consecutive 10-2 records. After last season's 5-6 disaster, Neuheisel's loose-ship approach was questioned. Asked what he's done with the players this year, Neuheisel said: "You see what happens? You get a reputation for something and everybody wants to know what you are doing new and different. You know what we did? We practiced football to see if we can't be a good team by the end of this year." ■ — **Dave Sittler**



OSU's Bob Simmons would rather address football-related questions instead of providing daily health reports.

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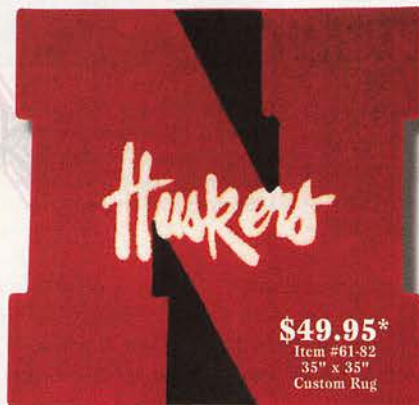
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California Dreaming?

While Nebraska appreciates Cal coming to the rescue following the bailout by Houston, it isn't looking to repay the favor with a loss



Mike BABCOCK

NEBRASKA'S GAME at California this week is a result of luck rather than design.

The Cornhuskers were supposed to play at Houston this season. But Houston backed out, and not only that, the backout didn't occur until late last September, leaving Nebraska in a bind.

Had Cornhusker athletic director Bill Byrne not attended a late-October meeting at which California also was represented, Nebraska might have been forced to add the Eddie Robinson Classic just so it would have three non-conference games. Scheduling requires more advance notice.

Fortunately for Nebraska, California also had an opening on its 1998 schedule, after dropping a non-NCAA Division I-A opponent. The schools got to talking at the meeting, and a two-game series was arranged. The Golden Bears will play in Lincoln on Sept. 11 next season.

"It was lucky on both parts," Byrne said in announcing the series last November.

Nebraska would have been luckier financially if it had been able to find a Division I-A opponent willing to come to Lincoln twice instead of playing home-and-away. That's economic reality.

But traveling to Berkeley, Calif., is a reasonable substitute for Houston. For one thing, "it'll be great for our alumni," said Byrne. There are an estimated 20,000 Northern Californians for Nebraska. For another, the Cornhuskers should benefit from the recruiting exposure on the West Coast.

Nebraska recruits nationally, which means it needs to travel on occasion. That would have been the primary benefit from a Houston trip, though exposure in Texas is accomplished anyway now with membership in the Big 12. The Cornhuskers play at Texas A&M this season.

In addition to the financial and recruiting considerations, the quality of non-conference opponents has become more important because of the strength-of-schedule component in ratings for the Bowl Championship Series. How the California game will fill that need remains to be seen.

Ideally for Nebraska, the Golden Bears will win their remaining nine games after losing to the Cornhuskers. If the Cornhuskers were to be upset at Berkeley on Saturday, Byrne's chance encounter with California officials at that meeting last October would not have been lucky after all.

For the more pessimistic Cornhusker fans, California's defensive coordinator, Lyle Setencich, was the linebackers coach at Arizona State when it upset Nebraska, 19-0, at Tempe in 1996; plus, the field at California's Memorial

Stadium, like the one at Sun Devil Stadium, is natural grass.

Arizona State coach Bruce Snyder once coached at California, if you're looking for ominous signs. But coach Tom Holmoe's second Golden Bear team isn't likely to contend for the Pac-10 title.

California is better known for academics and political activism than for football. The Golden Bears haven't played in the Rose Bowl since 1959. The only Pac-10 team that hasn't represented the conference in Pasadena on New Year's Day since then is Arizona. Even Oregon State has made it.

There's a Nebraska connection to California's last Rose Bowl team, by the way. Pete Elliott was in his second season as head coach, after bailing out on the Cornhuskers after only one season. Elliott, who replaced Bill Glassford after



The Cal defense will, at least in scheme, resemble the Arizona State attack that stymied the Huskers in the forgettable 1996 loss in Tempe, Ariz.

being an assistant to Bud Wilkinson at Oklahoma, was the youngest major college football coach in modern history. He was 29 when he came to Nebraska in 1956.

The Cornhuskers were 4-6 under his direction. He was succeeded by Bill Jennings.

Two transfers (Vince Ferragamo and Tom Kramer), one head coach defection and one game 20 years ago (which Nebraska won at Lincoln, 36-26) are about the extent of Nebraska's tradition with California in football. So it could hardly be described as rich.

Even so, California bailed out the Cornhuskers by agreeing to the two-game series that begins this week. In all likelihood, Nebraska will benefit with a couple of victories.

Most programs would schedule the Cornhuskers only as a last resort.

Apparently, California faced that situation. Certainly, Nebraska did. ■



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Power In Visualization

Pre-game speeches motivate, but NU has found there's no better way to get up for a game then watching highlight tapes set to blood-pumping tunes



BILL DOLEMAN

BY ALL INDICATIONS Knute Rockne was a great football coach.

His 105-12-5 record in 13 years at Notre Dame would attest to that. But his legend through film and folklore has, rightly or wrongly, put him in a class all of his own, especially when it comes to a coach's most hallowed game-day duty — the lockerroom speech. His "win one for the Gipper" plea has become a metaphor for every situation

in the game of life in which "the breaks are beating the boys."

Every coach is different, and not every one has been portrayed by Pat O'Brien (the actor not the broadcaster), so determining the best pre-game orator would be futile. The oft-quoted Vince Lombardi, once portrayed by Ernest Borgnine, was different than Barry Switzer, whose charismatic style was much different from that of Tom Osborne, whose mere presence spoke volumes to the troops he led.

At Nebraska, like most schools, the head coach and captains address the team before kickoff, but the Huskers have added another element in recent years that has made a production, literally, out of pre-game preparations — psych-up videos. Dr. Jack Stark is in his 10th year as the Huskers' team psychologist, and for the past nine years, he has served in a very non-official capacity as an executive producer of videotapes designed, as he puts it, "to take them (the players) to the edge."

Early on, the tapes consisted of coaches' films and hard-hitting NFL highlights edited to music on Saturdays before games. The past three years, Stark has enlisted the assistance of Lance Schwartz, an audio-visual specialist on the NU campus, to do the actual production.

Using HuskerVision's game tapes and state-of-the-art facilities, Schwartz estimates up to eight hours of work goes into each of the five- to 10-minute tapes which have become a big hit with the Big Red.

"The benefit to us is huge. When the captains speak, you know it's from the heart," said fullback Joel Makovicka, who, as a current Husker captain, will be making a psych-up appearance of his own in the near future. "You can tell there's a lot of enthusiasm and intensity in the room when you're listening to them and watching the highlights. You get goosebumps and pumped up, and all that carries over into the game."

A tape is made for every game, but when NU is at home,

one is made for the offense and another for the defense (guess which one has a little harder edge to it). Showtime is approximately 45 minutes before kickoff. After that, Stark says, it's time to focus. "Everything is shut off."

"There's no music. No horseplay. They know it's time to get into pre-game mode."

The stars of the pre-game show are the players themselves, whose speeches taped mid-week set the tone by addressing — in their own words, in their own way — the theme of the game.

Before the season opener with Louisiana Tech, it was rush end and co-captain Chad Kelsay who took centerstage and hammered home Nebraska's Memorial Stadium winning streak and Frank Solich's first game as head coach, among other thoughts. It was an effort worthy of two thumbs up.

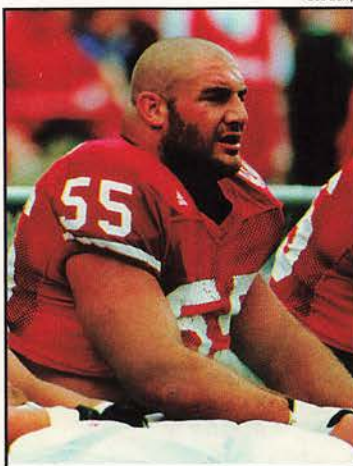
Still, the star of stars is former Cornhusker team captain Christian Peter, whose psych-up tape performance bordered on an audition for professional wrestling.

Music is also a key, and finding the right tunes to stir the emotions of 100-plus players is perhaps the duo's biggest challenge. But suffice it to say, Metallica, Guns 'N Roses and AC/DC have become mainstays on the Husker hit parade, and a good highlight never goes out of style. For example, Mike Rucker's dismantling of Kansas State's Joe Gordon on a punt return block in 1995.

According to Schwartz, Rucker's block was "vintage psych-up stuff."

"Some players are too cool to get fired up, but a big hit will do it," he said. "And there's a lot of reaction to isos (isolation shots). Some of the best stuff is non-headliners, like a Jon Vedral or Jeff Lake doing their job blocking downfield. There's power in visualization, so it's important that you show everyone doing their job. That way you make them feel involved and remind them of what they can do."

Schwartz admits the tapes probably have little impact on the outcome of a game, other than to hopefully give NU a bit of a psychological advantage, plus "they do get pretty good reviews." ■



Bob Berry

Former captain Christian Peter's set the all-time standard for recorded tape with his nearly psychotic pre-game antics.

Bill Doleman's face is familiar to Cornhusker fans. He is host for several Nebraska-related television programs including the "Husker Show" and coaches' shows for Terry Pettit, Paul Sanderford and Frank Solich.

Finding Peace In The Lockerroom

Don't look for Frank Solich to fall victim to the backbiting and fan outcries that tarnished the once golden Rick Neuheisel



**Curt
McKEEVER**

AN ATHLETE COMES to play for a legend and then the coach steps down.

I wonder how much impact Tom Osborne's retirement will have on the Cornhuskers' football program for the next few seasons.

I wonder, even though Frank Solich, a 19-year assistant to Osborne, seems like the natural choice as his successor.

Many people thought the energetic Rick Neuheisel was a perfect choice to replace Bill McCartney at Colorado, but last year, when the Buffaloes struggled to a 5-6 record with many of McCartney's recruits in their senior season, there sure seemed to be a lot of grumbling and finger-pointing directed at the head coach.

And a lot of it, reportedly, was coming from the lockerroom.

So I wonder, will the players who came to play for Osborne naturally do the same for Solich? Especially if things ever get so tough that the Cornhuskers are out of the running for a national championship or conference title.

Solich, for one, doesn't seem to be concerned about it.

"I understand the disappointment in not being able to play under Tom through their career," he said, "but it's amazing. They have moved on very, very well. They're very focused on winning football games."

Junior cornerback Ralph Brown admitted that 75 percent of the reason he became a Cornhusker was because of Osborne.

"He was a legend, and he seemed really honest when he came to visit me in my house," Brown said. "I just got along with him well. We didn't talk that much, but when he spoke to me, I felt real comfortable."

Now, Brown answers to a different "boss," but says there's hardly been an adjustment.

"For the guys that have been here, I think we know how to win now," he said. "Coach Osborne has instilled his tradition into us, and we're just going to carry that."

Indeed, Solich seems quite content carrying on in Osborne-like fashion.

"I don't believe that my style will be much different than Tom's," he said. "I feel in terms of focus, preparation, types of relationships that you build with your players, I've tried to do a lot of things that Tom did because I think that's the right choice to take, the right way to deal with your players."

I think everybody's personality is different. I think if you talked to the players, they'd probably say I'm quite a bit different than Tom. But from my end of it, I hope that a lot of things that he did to help the program be successful I'll be able to continue.

"I've got no designs to try and make or force my own mark on this program. Coaching on a daily basis, I'm trying to prepare the team to play as well they can play. That will all take care of itself in terms of a guy's own mark on a program. I'm really more interested in keeping this program at a high level."

Something in which he's already played a big role. After all, who do you think recruited most of the running backs the last 15 years?

"I've had a chance to recruit a number of the guys here, so I think they felt good enough about me through that recruiting process to show up," Solich said. "I never once felt like I'd have to work at developing relationships with players. I felt like there was (already) a good relationship."

"I think they still feel that it's a great program to be in and that they're treated well and fairly in this program. That's about all you can do."

Brown calls the 53-year-old Solich more active than the 61-year-old Osborne, saying he will "run around in practice and challenge you."

Center Josh Heske says matter-of-factly that the Cornhuskers expect things to run smoothly.

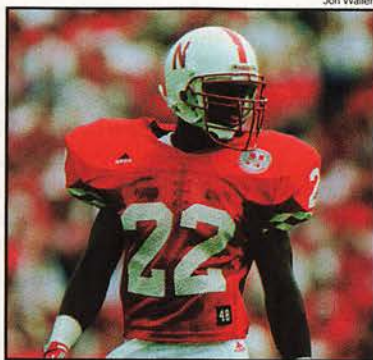
"Yeah, I was recruited by Coach Osborne, but Coach Solich has been around and been a part of everybody's life," he said. "He's a coach who really relates to his players, so we want to go out and play well for him, as well as for ourselves."

The bottom line is Solich seems totally at ease with his situation.

"When you follow a guy like Tom, certainly it's not easy," he said. "But there are other coaches out there that followed other great people. It's part of it, and I'm looking forward to it."

Even if some of his players might be looking curiously over his shoulder to see how he handles a fourth-and-3 situation in the waning minutes of a game where the Cornhuskers need a first down.

"They won't be the only ones," Solich said, laughing. ■



Ralph Brown may be answering to a new boss, but he's still playing under the same rules and direction.

Jon Waller

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter, covering the University of Nebraska for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football he is the primary beat writer for the men's basketball and baseball teams.

Cal Tries To Stay Golden At Home

Justin Vedder and the Golden Bears try to keep an even flow through the 1998 season

By Mark DEROWITSCH

You don't even have to look at a calendar to know the month of September is upon us. Based on the talk of football coaches around the country, you know what time of year it is.

We've all heard it before — coaches saying they're taking it one game at a time, no game is more important than the others, every team is starting from the same position.

That kind of talk is especially loud from coaches whose teams are coming off a disappointing season.

You won't hear that kind of coach-speak from California coach Tom Holmoe, though.

A year ago, Holmoe's first season at Berkeley, the Golden Bears finished with a 3-8 record and won just once after the third week of the season. But instead of talking about getting respect, the Bears have their sights set much higher.

"We expect to win," Holmoe said. "We expect to go to a bowl game. We expect to be in the race for the league title heading down the stretch run. If that expectation puts pressure on us, so be it. It's time to step up and be counted, and I think our team has accepted that challenge."

For the Golden Bears to accomplish Holmoe's lofty goals, getting off to a good start to open the season is crucial.

Four times this decade, California has ended the season playing in a bowl game. The last three times — in 1991, 1993 and 1996 — the Golden Bears opened the year with five consecutive victories. Granted, in 1996 the Golden Bears finished 6-6 after a loss in the Aloha Bowl, but a lightning-fast start made bowl scouts take notice early on in the year.

A 5-0 start may be difficult to achieve this year. After opening with a 14-10 home win over Houston, the Golden Bears will take on defending co-national champion Nebraska at 6 p.m. CDT on Sept. 12 at home.

If California expects to go bowling in 1998, its offense will have to do a better job.

For starters, the Golden Bears need to find the end zone a little more often. Last season, Cal averaged nearly 400 yards of total offense each game, but scored just an average of 26 points per contest. Cal's scoring average was ranked seventh in the Pac-10 Conference.

NEBRASKA
(2-0)

@

CALIFORNIA
(1-0)



Ralph BROWN



Matt BECK

September 12, 1998 • 6:30 p.m. (PST)
Memorial Stadium • Berkeley, Calif.

The Golden Bears have plenty of tools offensively. Quarterback Justin Vedder threw for 2,718 yards in his first year as a starter and ranked 22nd nationally in total offense, averaging 249.4 yards per game. More important, however, is the fact that the left-handed Vedder has a year of seasoning in Cal's version of the West Coast offense and should be even more effective this season.

Tentative 2 Deeps

NEBRASKA OFFENSE

SE	6	Kenny Cheatham***	6-4	210	Sr.
3	Matt Davison*	6-0	180	So.	
LT	69	Adam Julch**	6-5	315	Jr.
72	Ben Gessford*	6-2	290	Sr.	
LG	63	James Sherman**	6-2	295	Jr.
54	Dominic Raiola	6-2	300	Fr.	
C	59	Josh Heskew***	6-3	290	Sr.
54	Dominic Raiola	6-2	300	Fr.	
RG	72	Ben Gessford*	6-2	290	Sr.
55	Russ Hochstein*	6-3	280	So.	
RT	65	Jason Schwab*	6-1	300	Jr.
58	Dave Volk	6-4	280	Fr.	
TE	88	Sheldon Jackson***	6-4	245	Sr.
85	T.J. DeBates**	6-3	250	Jr.	
QB	12	Bobby Newcombe*	6-0	195	So.
7	Eric Crouch	6-0	200	Fr.	
FB	45	Joel Makovicka***	5-11	240	Sr.
15	Willie Miller*	6-0	230	So.	
IB	36	Correll Buckhalter*	6-0	225	So.
38	Dan Alexander*	6-0	250	So.	
WB	14	Lance Brown***	5-11	190	Sr.
-or-	5	Shewin Wiggins**	5-11	200	Sr.
PK	14	Kris Brown***	5-10	205	Sr.

NEBRASKA DEFENSE

LR	57	Chad Kelsay**	6-3	250	Sr.
83	Kyle Vanden Bosch*	6-4	260	So.	
NT	96	Steve Warren**	6-1	305	Jr.
70	Jason Lohr	6-3	275	Fr.	
DT	99	Jason Wiltz**	6-4	310	Sr.
91	Loran Kaiser*	6-5	280	So.	
RR	84	Mike Rucker***	6-6	290	Sr.
92	Travis Toline**	6-3	245	Sr.	
SLB	46	Brian Shaw**	6-1	215	Jr.
-or-	37	Tony Ortiz	6-0	215	Jr.
MLB	44	Jay Foreman***	6-1	240	Sr.
13	Carlos Polk*	6-3	245	So.	
WLB	1	Eric Johnson**	6-1	205	Sr.
50	Julius Jackson**	6-0	235	Jr.	
LCB	16	Erwin Swiney*	6-0	185	So.
9	Khari Reynolds*	5-10	185	So.	
FS	21	Mike Brown**	5-10	205	Jr.
27	Greg McGraw	6-2	200	Jr.	
ROV	25	Joe Walker*	5-10	200	So.
29	Gregg List**	6-0	220	Jr.	
RCB	22	Ralph Brown***	5-9	180	Jr.
11	Jerome Peterson**	5-7	185	Jr.	
P	23	Bill Lafleur***	5-11	200	Sr.

Tentative 2 Deeps

CALIFORNIA DEFENSE

DE	33	John McLaughlin*	6-4	240	Sr.
58	Mawuko Tugbenyoh**	6-1	235	Jr.	
NT	94	Jacob Waasdorp*	6-2	285	So.
99	Nate Geldermann**	6-1	245	So.	
DT	98	Jerry DeLoach*	6-4	310	Jr.
85	Eric Brandon**	6-5	260	Sr.	
DE	73	Andre Carter*	6-4	245	So.
95	Jeremiah Parker**	6-5	300	Jr.	
OLB	13	Sekou Sanyika**	6-3	230	Jr.
53	Keith Miller	6-2	240	Jr.	
ILB	59	Matt Beck**	6-4	230	Jr.
42	Justin Flagg***	6-1	235	Sr.	
ILB	44	Albert Dorsey	6-2	235	Jr.
43	Jamaal Cherry	6-3	255	Fr.	
LC	31	Derrick Gardner***	6-0	185	Sr.
-or-	11	Drae Harris	5-10	175	Jr.
FS	20	Pete DeStefano**	6-2	215	Jr.
2	Damian Marzett	6-0	200	Jr.	
SS	9	Marquis Smith***	6-3	220	Sr.
19	Don Smith*	6-2	210	Jr.	
RC	25	Chidi Ikwuoma*	5-9	175	So.
-or-	8	Daltha O'Neal**	5-11	190	Jr.
P	89	Nick Harris*	6-3	205	So.

CALIFORNIA OFFENSE

WR	81	Dameane Douglas***	6-1	190	Sr.
6	Joel Young*	6-2	180	Jr.	
LT	64	John Welbourn***	6-5	315	Sr.
71	Kevin Doherty*	6-5	310	Jr.	
LG	76	Tate McAllister**	6-3	285	Jr.
60	Reed Diehl*	6-4	280	So.	
C	73	John Romero*	6-3	315	Jr.
63	Caleb Brown***	6-4	305	Sr.	
RG	68	Robert Truhitte	6-5	290	Jr.
71	Kevin Doherty*	6-5	310	Jr.	
RT	71	Kevin Doherty*	6-5	310	Jr.
66	Langston Walker	6-8	340	Fr.	
TE	87	Brian Surgenor*	6-4	220	So.
-or-	45	A.J. Kunkle*	6-2	230	Sr.
WR	88	Phillip Pipersburg*	5-10	180	So.
3	Michael Ainsworth	6-1	180	Fr.	
QB	10	Justin Vedder*	6-0	200	Sr.
5	Samuel Clemons	6-2	210	Fr.	
FB	40	Joshua White*	5-11	240	So.
46	Mike Freeman***	6-1	240	Sr.	
TB	4	Marcus Fields*	6-2	210	So.
35	Marcus Oliver*	5-11	200	So.	
K	27	Ignacio Brache*	6-0	210	Jr.

Holmoe is expecting much more out of his offensive unit.

"We moved the football last year, but the bottom line is scoring points and winning games, and that result wasn't satisfactory," he said. "Having everybody on the same page for the second year in a row is a big advantage. Plus, I believe we've addressed some of the areas for improvement through recruiting."

One area Holmoe beefed up is Cal's receiving corp. Seniors Dameane Douglas — who was second on the team behind All-America Bobby Shaw with 53 catches for 610 yards and three touchdowns — and Bruce Pierre are Cal's top receivers.

They'll be pushed by two freshmen, prep All-American Michael Ainsworth and Ronnie Davenport, the Bay Area high school player of the year. Holmoe said his two prized freshmen could see extensive playing time this fall.

"I think one of the things you see right away with Michael Ainsworth and Ronnie Davenport is that there is no fear factor," Holmoe said. "They came in for the very first day and they appeared to step right in. That is something that you try to get in recruiting. We knew that we were going to have a shortage at receiver, so we spent a very large part of our recruiting evaluation last year preparing to bring in some great receivers. They are doing exactly what we would like them to do. I am really happy with all of the receivers' progress."

Sophomore Marcus Fields takes over at tailback, where he rushed for 419 yards and scored five touchdowns last season as a reserve.

Defensively, the Golden Bears

allowed teams to move the ball via the big play last season, a trend which contributed heavily to their seventh place finish in the Pac-10. Sixty-six times last year California gave up a pass play that went for at least 20 yards or at least a 15-yard run, and thirty times a big play resulted in a touchdown.

The Golden Bears seemed most vulnerable to the pass. Cal's secondary gave up nearly 240 passing yards per game and picked off just four passes.

Free safety Marquis Smith returns after a season in which he led the team in tackles and knockouts (he cold-cocked Arizona State tailback Michael Martin with a vicious hit). Strong safety Pete Destefano started 10 games last year. Cornerbacks Derrick Gardner and Chidi Iwuoma will be pushed by Deltha O'Neal, a converted tailback who expects to see a lot of playing time in the secondary this fall.

Against the run, the Golden Bears were pretty solid, giving up just 145 yards per game on the ground. That may be a little misleading in the pass-happy Pac-10, but three starters return on Cal's defensive front. One player to watch is defensive end Andre Carter, a sophomore who stepped into the starting lineup midway through the season and finished fifth on the team in tackles as a true freshman. Jeremiah Parker, another talented end, will back up Carter but should see plenty of time on the field.

"There is a possibility that Jeremiah could play inside," Holmoe said. "Our philosophy would be that going into a schedule like we have, that he's going to have to be able to come in and rest some of the ends, and we feel great about that."

If Cal does get invited to the postseason, it will have earned it. In addition to playing Nebraska, Cal hosts Washington State and UCLA and must play Washington and USC on the road.

Although facing the defending co-national champs is a daunting task, Holmoe insists his team did not devote extra preparation time for the Huskers this offseason.

"We spent preparation on Houston in summer training camp," Holmoe admitted. ■

TALE OF THE TAPE

Who Has The Edge?

QUARTERBACKS

The arm of Cal's Justin Vedder vs. a banged-up Bobby Newcombe for the Huskers. Both bring different attributes to the position. Tough call, but give the nod to experience.



RUNNING BACKS

No contest here. Correll Buckhalter has been solid for the Huskers. To make matters worse for Cal, Nebraska's DeAngelo Evans may see his first action in over 16 months against the Golden Bears.



RECEIVERS

Cal has two experienced receivers in Dameane Douglas and Bruce Pierre, in addition to a couple of highly touted freshmen. The Huskers' receivers are often overlooked, but they always get the job done.



OFFENSIVE LINE

Nebraska is still inexperienced for the most part, but still dominant. Nagging injuries have hit the Huskers offensive linemen early in the season, but they won't affect their ability to blow the Golden Bears off the ball.



DEFENSIVE LINE

Cal stopped the run last year, but mostly against Pac-10 passing teams. Nobody runs on the Huskers. Louisiana Tech couldn't do it, UAB couldn't do it and Cal won't be able to do it, either.



LINEBACKERS

Cal's linebacking unit is largely inexperienced. Nebraska's is large and experienced. Jay Foreman could have a field day in Berkeley. Again, Nebraska will have more talent on their bench than Cal will on the field.



SECONDARY

Nebraska has one of the best defensive backfields in the nation, its performance against Louisiana Tech notwithstanding. Cal picked off just four passes and gave up nearly 250 yards per game last year.



SPECIAL TEAMS

Husker kicker Kris Brown is as special as they come. After the Alabama-Birmingham game, his consecutive string of point-after attempts was 92 and climbing. The Husker return game has also been clicking on all cylinders.



QB JUSTIN VEDDER

VS

NEBRASKA SECONDARY

KEY MATCHUP

The Huskers gave up nearly 600 yards passing in the season opener against Louisiana Tech, and Cal will show a similar passing attack. In his first season as the starter a year ago, Justin Vedder threw for 2,718 yards in his first try at running a West Coast offense. Cal wants to throw the ball deep a little more this fall — the Bears had just nine pass plays of more than 40 yards a year ago — and will likely test the Huskers' secondary, which has been under attack since the opener. Vedder is left-handed, too, giving the Huskers a different look to go with his offense.

The Huskers' defensive backs played well against Louisiana Tech's passing attack in the first half and wasn't really needed in Nebraska's big win. Mike Brown moved to free safety from rover to replace the injured Clint Finley. But Finley is expected to return to the lineup against California, giving the Huskers even more experience in the secondary. If the second half against Louisiana Tech was any indication, the secondary had better be ready to tighten the screws against Vedder and the Cal passing attack. ■

Eric Crouch was going to drink more water, just to make sure he was sufficiently hydrated. Then he was going to join family and friends to celebrate the realization of a childhood dream.

"They might be waiting for me outside right now," he said.

He had been waiting for this day almost as long as he could remember, or at least since he first imagined himself playing football for Nebraska, which was a long time ago.

One week earlier, the redshirt freshman from Omaha (Millard North) had been Bobby Newcombe's backup, the second quarterback to play against Louisiana Tech.

But last Saturday afternoon, with Newcombe relegated to the sideline in shorts and his No. 12 jersey because of a partial tear in a knee ligament, Crouch became the Cornhusker starter.

And not only that, he responded to the challenge, running for two touchdowns and passing for one in what some might consider a lackluster 38-7 victory against Alabama-Birmingham.

Beauty, however, is in the eye of the beholder. "I don't think we looked bad, by any stretch of the imagination," Frank Solich said of his second victory as Nebraska's head coach.

"We're 2-0, so I'm hoping that we've got a good football team, and in terms of how people look at us, I guess that's up to them as to how they vote (in the polls). I'm satisfied with this win today.

"I was satisfied with the win last week. Our kids have a lot of heart, a lot of spirit. They're in excellent condition. They've played two tough games. They've come out on top. And it didn't come down to the wire in either one of them. I think we're fine. Where we should be rated, I don't know.

"We'll know a little bit more after three, four, five games probably."

Solich already knows he has two talented young quarterbacks in Crouch and Newcombe, who suffered the injury to his left posterior cruciate ligament during the Louisiana Tech game.

The injury didn't require surgery — it couldn't have been corrected that way — but it was sufficiently sore, as well as enough of a concern, that Newcombe wasn't cleared to play.

So on the day before the game, Crouch was named the starter.

And the day after, he was considerably more confident.

"It's obvious we do have some depth there," Solich said of the quarterback position. "They're both still inexperienced. They'll face a lot of different things as they go through the next three, four, five games. But the first two games, really I think, have probably given them a great deal of confidence."

Senior Monte Christo, the No. 3 quarterback, was of the same opinion. "If I were a fan, I'd feel very comfortable with the guys we have at this position for the next four years," he said.

Christo contributed to the victory against Alabama-Birmingham, too, getting his opportunity after Crouch went to the training room late in the third quarter with cramps.

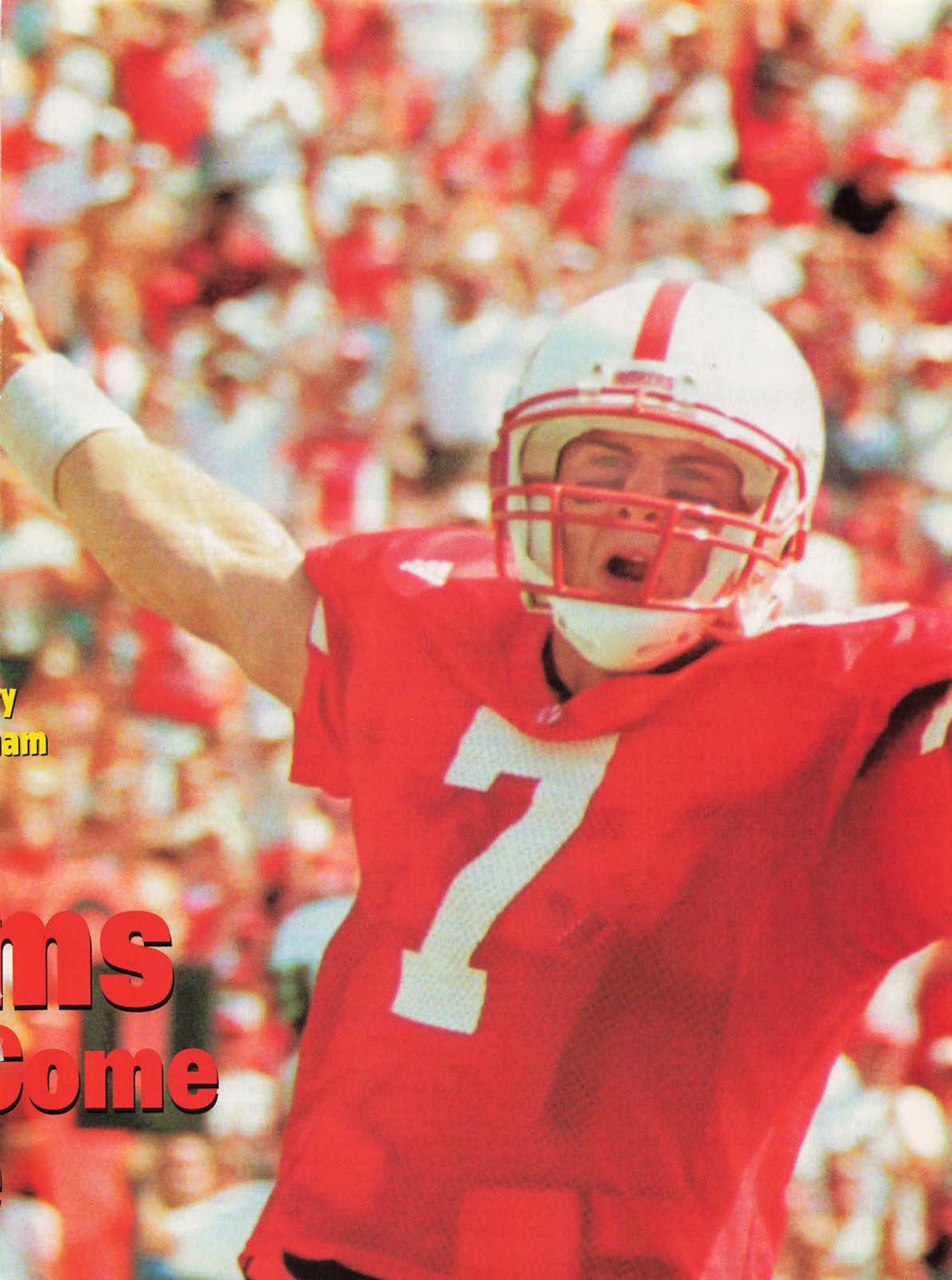
Crouch first got a cramp in his calf, as a result of someone stepping on his leg. Then he got a cramp in his hip, and on the way to the training room, he got a cramp in his shoulder.

While Crouch was getting an IV, Christo did himself proud. When Crouch left the field, "it was a concern to us," said Solich. "But Monte has run our offense very well.

Eric Crouch caps off his first career start at Nebraska with a 59-yard touchdown run in the fourth quarter.

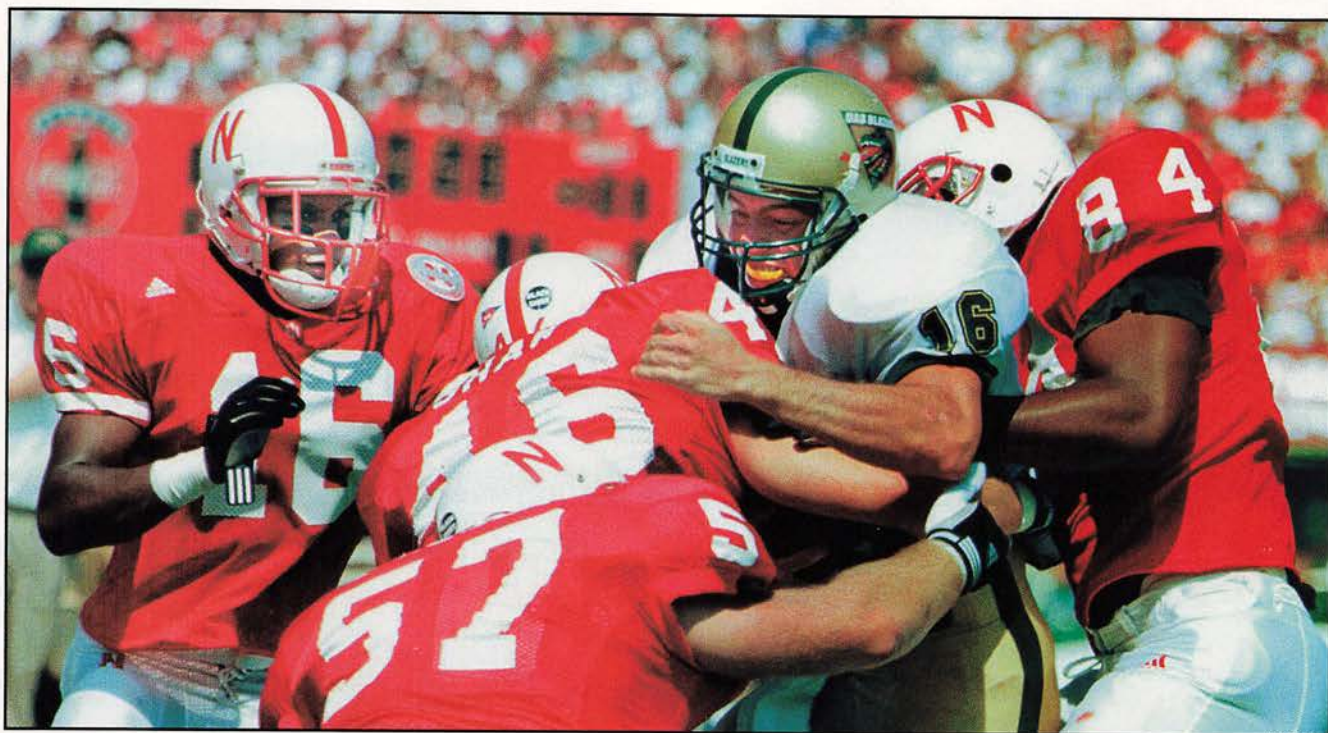
Eric Crouch Realizes Lifelong Goal, Leads Nebraska To 38-7 Victory Over Alabama-Birmingham
By Mike Babcock

Dreams Do Come True



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Scott Bruhn

"He's just not had a chance to do it in games. And really, to some degree, even in practice he's been limited with injuries throughout the course of his career here. But every time he's had a chance to operate, he's done very well. And so the players have a lot of confidence in him."

Christo finished off the scoring late in the game, teaming with redshirt freshman tight end Tracey Wistrom on a 63-yard touchdown pass. Only 2:19 remained.

The final points were largely cosmetic. But Alabama-Birmingham coach Watson Brown had no complaints. "It takes two to tango, and we ought to make the (defensive) play," he said.

"That's football. That's not running it up for me. You are out there trying to run your (plays) and score and compete for a national championship, and every game matters on points nowadays."

Though the outcome never appeared to be in serious doubt, the game wasn't nearly as lopsided as the 31-point margin seemed to suggest.

"We just weren't good enough," Brown said. "We fought them, but they didn't make enough mistakes. Nebraska didn't give us anything. We would move it a little bit, (but) they kept their poise on defense. They finally just wore us out."

The Blazers had some success running out of a Wishbone set against a Blackshirt defense that was without tackle Jason Wiltz and, for the second

game in a row, safety Clint Finley.

Wiltz was sidelined by an ankle sprain, and Finley was still rehabbing a knee injury.

Sophomore Loran Kaiser replaced Wiltz, and like Crouch, responded to the challenge of his first start. He was credited with six tackles, including one quarterback sack for a 4-yard loss.

"This is the second-best day of my life," Kaiser said afterward.

The Thursday before the game, when he was issued a black practice jersey signifying his promotion to the No. 1 defense, the Blackshirts, "was the best day of my life," he said.

An equipment manager tossed the black practice jersey to Kaiser as he was getting ready for practice. He thought the jersey was intended for defensive tackle Steve Warren. He was handing it to Warren, in fact, when the equipment manager told him: "McBride sent that down for you."

"I was so excited," said Kaiser. Being a Blackshirt made the pre-game entrance even more special.

"It was like a reborn-again tunnel walk," he said. "I was really excited today."

Alabama-Birmingham's Wishbone quickly brought him back to reality.

"They didn't start doing that until late in the second quarter," Kaiser said. "When they started running that Wishbone, they got that long drive on us and I thought: Boom, wake up call."

Late in the first half, the Blazers drove 80 yards on 16 plays for a touchdown that cut the lead to 14-7. The

Alabama-Birmingham quarterback Daniel Dixon (16) wasn't able to get into a rhythm against the relentless pressure applied by the Husker defense.

drive, which used up 7 minutes and 35 seconds, included 12 running plays. "They'd dive that fullback, and I'd always go after him," Kaiser said. "He never had the ball. I was confused."

"But the coaches straightened it out real quick."

Nebraska's defensive coaches made adjustments at halftime. They "sat down and figured it out in about 2.2 seconds," he said. "We shut them down pretty good in the second half, I thought."

Alabama-Birmingham contributed to its own demise late in the third quarter with the score 21-7. The Blazers reached the NU 11-yard line, where they lined up second-and-7.

But rush end Chad Kelsay ran down quarterback Daniel Dixon from behind for a 4-yard loss. Then the Blazers were called for three consecutive penalties, two for false starts and the third for an offensive pass interference, pushing them well out of field-goal range and forcing a punt.

"We lost our poise," Brown said. "It got loud and we didn't have it."

Nebraska took over and drove 77 yards in 14 plays before stalling. Kris Brown came on to kick a 27-yard field goal, his 17th in a row without a miss over two seasons.

On the Cornhuskers' next possession, leading 24-7, Crouch ran 59 yards

for his second touchdown.

With the defense stacked to stop the play called in the huddle, he audibled, then "just followed Joel Makovicka's block and sure enough, saw daylight, and it was a home run."

Makovicka opened the scoring with a 3-yard touchdown run on Nebraska's third possession in the first quarter. The touchdown was the 12th of his career, tying the school record for career touchdowns by a fullback.

Tom Rathman (1981-85) and Bill Thornton (1960-62) also share the record.

Crouch passed to tight end Sheldon Jackson for 15 yards and the second touchdown on a fourth-and-1 early in the second quarter, then ran 11 yards to score with nine seconds left in the half.

"We had a '39 sprint' called, and the guy I was supposed to option off went ahead and took the I-back," Crouch said. "I knew there was only maybe somewhere between seven and 10 seconds on the clock, so I decided, 'There's green right there, I've got to take this. It's going to be my first touchdown.'"

"I saw it right there in front of me. I wasn't going to pitch the ball because it probably would have been a dead play, and I knew with the time running down, we needed it in the end zone, a score.

"I really wasn't thinking about not getting in. That was one thing I was going to make sure, after I saw that guy take the I-back, I made sure I was going to get in the end zone.

"If I had to break five, six, 10, 11 tackles, I was going to do that."

Crouch finished with 69 yards rushing, thanks to the second touchdown run, and 11-of-17 passing for 127 yards, without an interception and without being sacked.

His first game as a starter went almost exactly the way he dreamed it would.

"It's just one of those things where you prepare all week for it, and every time you go to bed, you're thinking about what kind of plays you're going to make," he said.

"You always visualize the big play, always visualize completing passes and getting the offense into the right plays, so I visualized those things a lot all week and just went out and executed my best."

His best was more than good enough, just as Newcombe's was the week before. ■

4TH & 1 INCHES

More News From The Alabama-Birmingham Game

• Senior place-kicker **Kris Brown** became the all-time leading scorer in Cornhusker history when he kicked a 27-yard field goal with 10:13 remaining in the third quarter. The field goal gave him 313 points for his career, one more than **Mike Rozier**, the 1983 Heisman Trophy winner.

Brown, who added two extra points to give him 315 for his career, also increased his school record for consecutive extra-point kicks without a miss to 92.

"It's an honor for me," he said of the career scoring record. "But it's not something I set as a goal when I got here. The way I look at it, this is a team game. I haven't done it by myself. I'm just kind of glad it's over with. I'm glad we can finally move on and not have to talk about it."

Brown was presented afterward with the ball he kicked for the record-setting field goal.

"I didn't want it to be a big deal on the field," he said.

• The last time a different quarterback started the first and second games of the season for Nebraska was in 1991, when **Mickey Joseph** started the opener and **Keithen McCant** started the second game. McCant started for the remainder of the season and was a first-team All-Big Eight selection.

• True freshman **Jeremy Slechta**, a defensive tackle, played for the first time at Nebraska. It appeared Slechta might be red-shirt. But when **Jason Wiltz** was sidelined by an ankle sprain, he was pressed into action. "I think he's going to be a great defensive lineman for us," said coach **Frank Solich**.

"I don't think there's any question. And, at this point, we needed him to play this year."

• Solich said it didn't appear the Cornhuskers sustained any serious new injuries against Alabama-Birmingham. But they had plenty of injuries to be concerned about already.

In addition to Wiltz, starting wingback **Lance Brown** has been sidelined by a broken foot and offensive tackle **Jeff Clausen** remains sidelined after having arthroscopic surgery on a knee in late August. I-back **DeAngelo Evans** has still not played because of arthroscopic knee surgery, and safety **Clint Finley** was held out of the Alabama-Birmingham game because of a knee injury.

• Nebraska was held scoreless in the third quarter, ending a string of 14 consecutive quarters in which the Cornhuskers had scored, dating back to the fourth quarter of last season's Colorado game.

• Several former Cornhuskers were among those honored during a half-time ceremony for their induction into the Nebraska football Hall of Fame. They included: **Dale Bradley**, a fullback on the 1941 Rose Bowl team; **Mike Kennedy**, an All-Big Eight linebacker and co-captain with Solich in 1965; **Derrie Nelson**, an All-American defensive end in 1980; **John Sedlacek**, a letterman from 1945-48 and an all-conference lineman; and **Tom Osborne**, the 1998 Hall of Fame coach inductee.

The game was the first Osborne attended as a former head coach. Others who were honored but not present at the ceremony were the late **Joy Berquist**, who played during the 1920s, **Neil Smith**, **Aaron Taylor** and **Grant Wistrom**. ■



Jason WILTZ

1998 Schedule/Record (2-0)

Aug. 29	vs. Louisiana Tech\$	W, 56-27
Sept. 5	Ala.-Birmingham	W, 38-7
Sept. 12	@ California	6 p.m.
Sept. 26	Washington	2:30 p.m.
Oct. 3	vs. Oklahoma St.&	TBA
Oct. 10	@ Texas A&M	1 p.m.
Oct. 17	Kansas	12:30 p.m.
Oct. 24	Missouri	12:30 p.m.
Oct. 31	Texas	12:30 p.m.
Nov. 7	@ Iowa St.	1 p.m.
Nov. 14	@ Kansas St.	1:10 p.m.
Nov. 27	Colorado	1:30 p.m.

\$ Eddie Robinson Football Classic • Memorial Stadium • Lincoln, Neb.
& Arrowhead Stadium • Kansas City, Mo.
(Times are subject to change and are Central)

BY THE NUMBERS

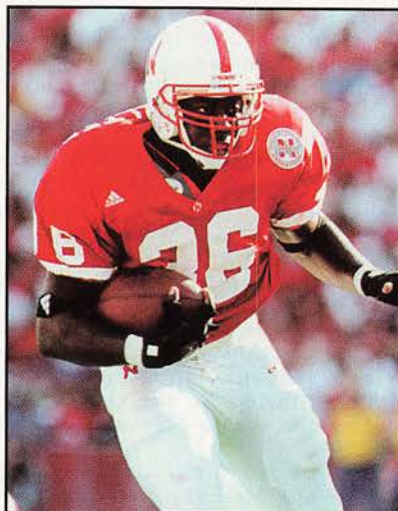
Nebraska vs Alabama-Birmingham
September 5, 1998 • Lincoln, Nebraska

Score By Quarters

UAB	0	7	0	0	—	7
Nebraska	7	14	0	17	—	38

Team Stats

	UAB	NU
First Downs	16	22
Rushing	11	13
Passing	3	7
Penalty	2	2
Rushing Attempts	46	43
Yards Gained Rushing	183	245
Yards Lost Rushing	29	9
Net Yards Rushing	154	236
Net Yards Passing	56	208
Passes Attempted	18	21
Passes Completed	8	15
Had Intercepted	0	0
Total Plays	64	64
Total Net Yards	210	444
Avg. Gain Per Play	3.3	6.9
Fumbles-Lost	4-0	2-1
Penalties-Yards	11-81	8-68
Punts-Yards	7-274	3-143
Avg. Per Punt	39.1	47.7
Punt Returns-Yards	1-12	3-51
Interceptions-Yards	0-0	0-0
Fumble Returns-Yards	0-0	0-0
Kickoff Returns-Yards	5-97	2-45
Possession Time	33:59	26:01



In just his second career start, Correll Buckhalter rushed for 96 yards on 19 carries against UAB.

Individual Leaders

NEBRASKA

Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Buckhalter, C.	19	96	5.1	14	0
Crouch, E.	7	69	9.9	59	2
Makovicka, J.	8	27	3.4	8	1
Alexander, D.	3	23	7.7	19	0
Wiggins, S.	2	12	6.0	6	0
Christo, M.	3	11	3.7	5	0
London, F.	1	-2	-2.0	-2	0

Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Crouch, E.	11-17-0	64.7	127	1
Christo, M.	4-4-0	100.0	81	1

Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Cheatham, K.	4	37	9.3	16	0
Jackson, S.	3	33	11.0	15	1
Buckhalter, C.	3	18	6.0	10	0
Wistrom, T.	1	63	63.0	63	1
Wiggins, S.	1	29	29.0	29	0
Makovicka, J.	1	17	17.0	17	0
Haafke, B.	1	6	6.0	6	0
Davison, M.	1	5	5.0	5	0

Name	Att.	Good	LNG
Brown, K.	1	1	27

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Wiggins, S.	3	51	17.0	35	0

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Wiggins, S.	2	45	22.5	24	0

Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Shaw, B.	5	5	10	0	0	0
Brown, M.	4	3	7	0	0	0
Kelsay, C.	5	1	6	1-4	0	0
Kaiser, L.	2	4	6	0	0	1-4
Foreman, J.	2	4	6	0	0	-5.3
Johnson, E.	3	2	5	0	0	0
Walker, J.	2	2	4	0	0	0
Vanden Bosch, K.	2	1	3	0	0	0
Swiney, E.	1	2	3	0	0	0
Warren, S.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Lohr, J.	2	0	2	0	0	0
Slecht, J.	1	1	2	0	0	-5.3
Jackson, J.	1	1	2	0	0	-1.9
Brown, R.	1	1	2	0	0	0

UAB

Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Dixon, D.	16	50	3.1	15	0
Miles, O.	8	33	4.1	7	1
Anderson, B.	7	30	4.3	15	0
Rea, K.	3	15	5.0	11	0
Foster, L.	4	13	3.3	5	0
Coleman, P.	1	10	10.0	10	0
Gallery, M.	1	2	2.0	2	0
Jolly, L.	6	1	0.2	13	0

Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Dixon, D.	8-15-0	53.3	56	0
Jolly, L.	0-3-0	0.0	0	0

Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Troupe, Q.	2	20	10.0	12	0
Anderson, B.	1	15	15.0	15	0
Johnson, D.	1	9	9.0	9	0
Crosby, U.	1	7	7.0	7	0
Arrington, J.	1	4	4.0	4	0
Foster, L.	1	1	1.0	1	0
Miles, O.	1	0	0.0	0	0

Name	Att.	Good	LNG
none			

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Foster, L.	1	12	12.0	12	0

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Gallery, M.	2	58	29.0	31	0
Foster, L.	2	24	12.0	14	0
Parker, O.	1	15	15.0	15	0

Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Foss, W.	7	3	10	0	0	0
Neal, C.	3	4	7	0	0	0
Monroe, S.	0	7	7	0	0	1-1
Smith, B.	3	3	6	0	0	1-2
Parker, O.	2	3	5	0	0	0
Jeter, C.	1	3	4	0	0	0
Morgan, S.	1	3	4	-2	0	0
Davis, P.	2	1	3	0	0	0
King, S.	2	1	3	0	0	0
Cloud, D.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Freeman, E.	0	2	2	-1	0	0
Godfrey, J.	0	2	2	0	0	0

'98 SEASON STATS

RUSHING

Name	G	Att.	Yds.	YPG	TD
Buckhalter, C.	2	38	239	119.5	2
Makovicka, J.	2	18	74	37.0	1
Alexander, D.	2	11	47	23.5	1
Wiggins, S.	2	4	32	16.0	0
Miller, W.	1	3	24	8.0	1
Brown, L.	1	1	13	13.0	0
Newcombe, B.	1	12	12	12.0	2
Crouch, E.	1	1	6	6.0	0
Christo, M.	1	3	11	11.0	0
London, F.	1	1	-2	-2.0	0

PASSING

Name	G	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Newcombe, B.	1	9-10-0	90.0	168	1
Crouch, E.	2	12-20-0	60.0	132	1
Christo, M.	1	4-4-0	100.0	81	1

RECEIVING

Name	G	No.	Yds.	YPC	YPG	TD
Cheatham, K.	2	7	75	10.7	37.5	0
Jackson, S.	2	5	127	25.4	63.5	2
Buckhalter, C.	2	4	30	7.5	15.0	0
Davison, M.	2	3	26	8.7	13.0	0
Wistrom, T.	1	1	63	63.0	63.0	1
Makovicka, J.	2	1	17	17.0	8.5	0
Debates, T.J.	1	1	16	16.0	16.0	0
Brown, L.	1	1	11	11.0	11.0	0
Haafke, B.	1	1	6	6.0	6.0	0

FIELD GOALS

Name	G	Att.	Good	Long
Brown, K.	2	1	1	27

DEFENSE

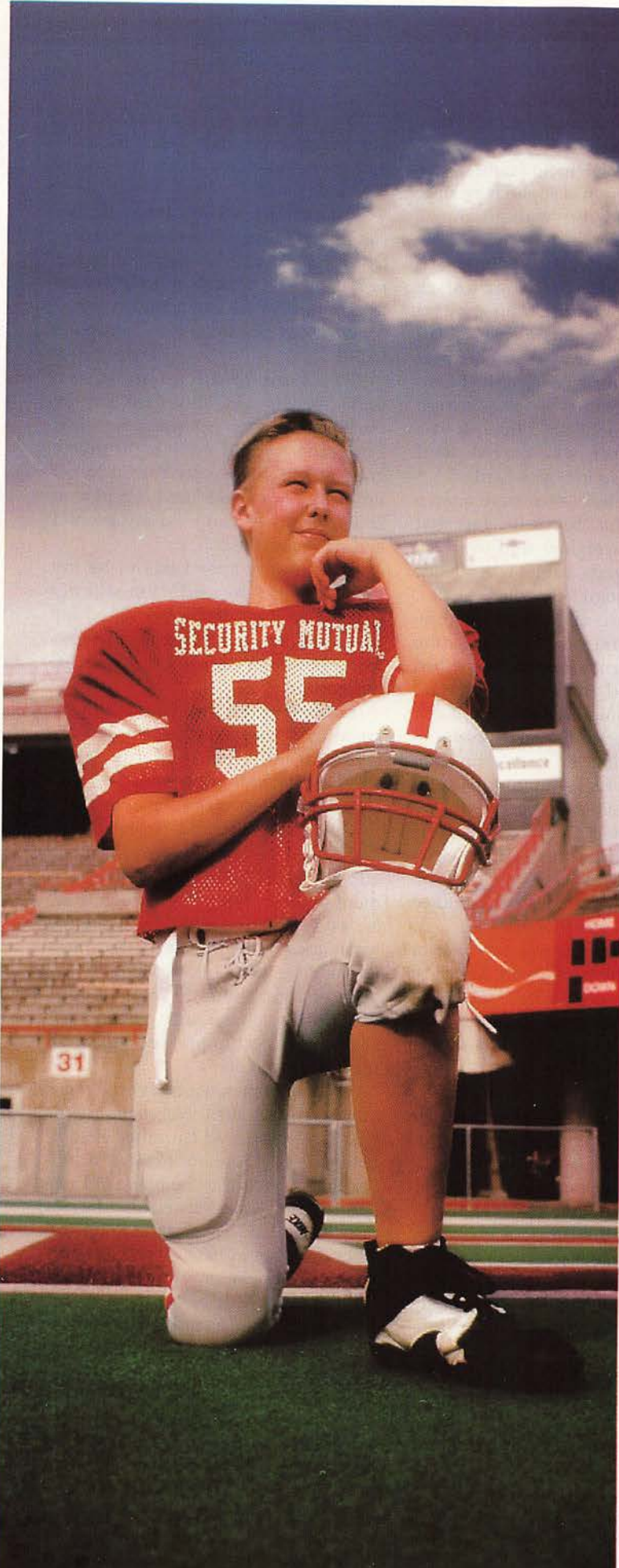
Name	G	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	S/Yds.
Johnson, E.	2	6	8	14	0	0	0
Brown, M.	2	8	7	15	0	0	0
Brown, R.	2	7	2	9	0	0	0
Swiney, E.	2	6	4	10	0	0	0
Foreman, J.	2	4	8	12	0	0	-5.3
Kelsay, C.	2	9	3	12	1-4	0	1-10
Walker, J.	2	5	5	10	1-5	0	0
Vanden Bosch, K.	2	5	1	6	1-5	0	1-13
Wills, A.	1	2	1	3	0	0	0
Warren, S.	2	3	2	5	0	0	0
Wiltz, J.	1	0	2	2	0	0	1
Jackson, J.	2	2	2	4	0	0	1-9
Reynolds, K.	1	2	0	2	0	0	0
Kaiser, L.	2	3	4	7	0	0	2-7
Ortiz, T.	2	1	1	2	0	0	0
Vedral, M.	2	1	1	2	0	0	0
Raymond, S.	2	2	0	2	0	0	0
Rucker, M.	2	1	1	2	0	0	0
Toline, T.	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
Polk, C.	1	1	0	1	1-3	0	0
Craver, K.	1	1	1	2	0	0	0
Shaw, B.	1	5	5	10	0	0	0
Lohr, J.	1	2	0	2	0	0	0
Slecht, J.	1	1	1	2	0	0	-5.3
Hogrefe, Q.	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
Beveridge, T.	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
McGraw, G.	1	0	1	1	0	0	0

TEAM STATISTICS

Total Offensive Yards	906	779				
Plays	133	146				
Average Per Play	6.8	5.3				
Average Per Game	453.0	389.5				
Net Rushing Yards	525	133				
Attempts	99	70				
TDs Rushing	10	1				
Net Passing Yards	381	646				
Attempts	34	82				
Completions	25	54				
Average Per Pass	11.2	7.9				
Average Per Catch	15.2	12.0				
Average Per Game	190.5	323.0				
TDs Passing	3	4				
Sacks By-Yards	3-26	1-6				
Fumbles-Lost	3-1	3-0				
Penalties-Yards	5-49	12-88				
Scoring	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	OT	TOT
NU	21	35	7	31	0	94
Opponents	0	13	15	6	0	34



Brian Shaw and the Husker defense held UAB to just 210 total yards.



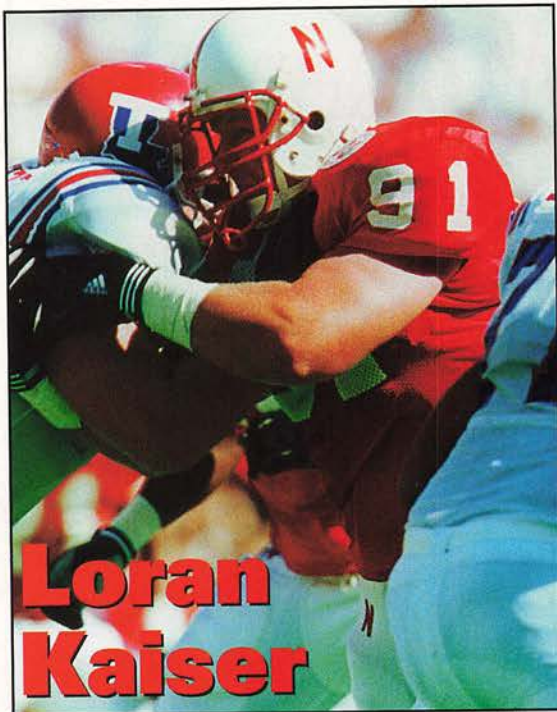
We believe in hard work, determination and commitment...

It's these qualities that have kept us strong and vital. And in business for 100 years. Whether it's through providing affordable life insurance protection for our policyholders, or supporting our midget football teams, we're dedicated to the principles of hard work, determination and commitment. Just like the Huskers. Security Mutual Life. Celebrating a Century of Security.



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PLAYERPROFILE



Scott Bruhn

Loran Kaiser is a small-town Nebraskan. And he wouldn't have it any other way.

"I live on a farm in the middle of nowhere," the sophomore defensive tackle said.

He was speaking figuratively about the nowhere part, of course. He lives in the middle of somewhere, and that somewhere is "right outside of Farwell," he said.

Farwell is about 15 miles west of St. Paul on Highway 92.

"There isn't a whole lot left in Farwell," said Kaiser.

It has a furniture store and a bar, but the grain elevator has been shut down.

It also has an elementary school. Kaiser and eight other students were in the last class to finish eighth grade there. The school now teaches kindergarten through sixth grade.

"It's still a nice town," Kaiser said. "Everybody's real nice there."

Everybody numbers about 150, which also means "everybody knows everybody else," he said.

Even though he played high school football in St. Paul, Kaiser makes sure his hometown is properly identified, and not because folks in Farwell demand it.

"They don't really get on me that much," he said. "I just like to do it because I'm proud of the town. We

were always the kids from Farwell."

"We" includes Brandon Wardyn, a sophomore rush end who walked on at Nebraska.

Farwell residents are equally proud of Kaiser and Wardyn, who grew up as schoolmates. Basketball "was always our big sport because we never had football until we got in high school," said the 6-foot-5 Kaiser, who played point guard in high school.

What's even more unique about that is the fact that he weighed well over 200 pounds, yet he was athletic enough to handle the ball.

He once registered 30 assists in a three-game tournament, and he helped lead St. Paul to a state championship as a junior.

St. Paul was similarly successful in football, reaching the quarterfinals of the state playoffs his junior year and the semifinals his senior year.

Kaiser earned all-state honorable mention in football, playing fullback on offense and middle linebacker on defense. Nebraska, however, recruited him to play defensive tackle.

"I never even touched the interior line until I came here," said Kaiser. "I stepped in the door here, and Coach (Charlie) McBride started showing me how to get in a defensive line stance. That's how it went."

He lacked not only experience at defensive tackle, but also size. He weighed only 235 pounds when he arrived as a freshman.

Practicing on the scout team that first season was a little discouraging.

"You're 240 pounds and you're going up against guys like Aaron Taylor and Chris Dishman," Kaiser said. "They weighed 300-plus pounds and were blowing me back to free safety sometimes."

By the time the team went to Miami to play Virginia Tech in the Orange Bowl, Kaiser was up to 250 pounds. Putting on the pounds wasn't all that easy, however.

"I'm eating and eating but the weight isn't coming on as fast as most people would think, considering how much I eat," said Kaiser.

"They always wanted us checking our weight every day. Coach McBride told me not to worry about the weight. It would come."

The scales read 280 when Kaiser stepped on after winter conditioning. During spring ball, his weight dropped to 270, but it was back up to 279 when he reported for fall camp. Near the end of two-a-day practices, it had dropped to 273.

"It's kind of an up-and-down thing," Kaiser said. "But I feel that by the time the season gets into full-swing, I'm going to hold my weight pretty good at 280. Eventually I want to get up to 285, but I feel like I can play at 280. I feel like I can hold my ground and still get to the ball."

"I think my speed has to be my biggest asset," he said. "I'm still not that big of a guy. I'm working on my pass rush, being quicker off my pass rush, showing a lot of effort, giving 100 percent."

Kaiser and Wardyn, who was hampered by a knee injury a year ago, are trying to follow in the footsteps of another St. Paul High graduate, Jeff Ogard, who started as a senior in 1996.

Ogard also played defensive tackle, and he had the size for it. He stood 6-6 and weighed 300 pounds. There is more to the position than size, however, as Kaiser has learned. "Once my technique got better, that helped me a lot, too," he said. "Coach McBride says once you get the little things down, that's when you get to be a good player. Weight, technique, footwork, all that comes into play."

Kaiser's hometown of Farwell ranks among the smallest Nebraska towns that have produced Cornhusker football players. There are plenty, including Burr, which was the home of Dean Steinkuhler, a consensus All-America and the Outland Trophy and Lombardi Award winner in 1983.

Burr's population was about 110 at the time and was believed to be the smallest town ever to produce a consensus All-American football player.

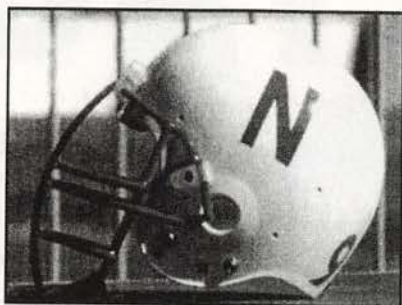
"Burr? I've never heard of it," said Kaiser. "Joel Makovicka, doesn't he come from a small town?"

Makovicka grew up on an acreage near Ulysses, Neb., which has a population at least half again as large as Farwell's. Obviously, when it comes to producing good athletes, the size of the community doesn't matter. ■

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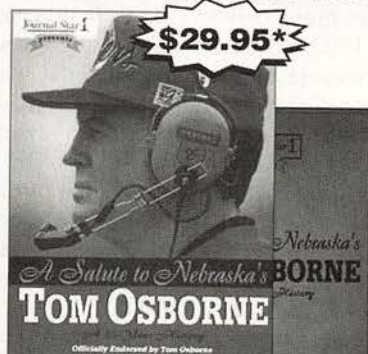
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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



NU's Top 10 QBs...

After breaking the hearts of his native Minnesotans, he helped lift Bob Devaney's fledgling program to heights that hadn't been seen in Lincoln in over 20 years

Dennis CLARIDGE

Nebraska returned from Minneapolis in late September of 1959 with more than a 32-12 victory against Minnesota, which would have been cause for celebration, even if it hadn't been so decisive.

The Cornhuskers had won only five times previously in a series that began in 1900 and included 35 games. Minnesota had dominated. That was fact, not opinion.

Nebraska also returned from Minneapolis that weekend with a recruit who would become one of the greatest quarterbacks in school history. His name was Dennis Claridge. He was a graduate of suburban Robbinsdale High School, class of 1959, and he had attended the Cornhuskers' victory.

He told Nebraska coach Bill Jennings of his intentions after the

game, in fact, causing controversy that led to Minnesota's severing athletic competition ties with Nebraska — though only briefly.

Claridge had been recruited by Nebraska, but he had decided he wanted to stay close to home, so he enrolled for fall semester classes at Minnesota. Classes had yet to begin,

reaction as "selfish" and "an indirect attempt to keep us from further recruiting in Minnesota. We feel that we have the privilege, as any other school has, of recruiting in any section of the country where we please," he said.

A Lincoln newspaper account offered the opinion that "the break

His name has been pushed well down the statistical lists, but as Bob Devaney wrote in his 1981 autobiography, Claridge was "a fine quarterback, maybe the best I ever had."

however.

After watching Nebraska's victory, and with encouragement from another Cornhusker recruit from Minnesota with whom he had played in an all-star game, Claridge changed his mind.

So he packed up the next day, drove to Lincoln and began classes at Nebraska.

Minnesota responded by filing a complaint with the NCAA, which investigated the matter and upheld Nebraska's claim that a student-athlete must attend classes at a school, not just enroll.

After the ruling, Minnesota announced it would end athletic competition with Nebraska.

Nebraska athletic director Bill Orwig described Minnesota's

with Nebraska might be an effort to cover the departure of Claridge, as the present Gopher athletic administration has been under heavy fire from alumni and fans."

Jennings distinguished himself as a recruiter, and not just in Minnesota, where he also found, among several others, Larry Kramer, a consensus All-American tackle in 1964. But the beneficiary of Jennings' recruiting skills was his successor as Nebraska's head coach, Bob Devaney.

And none benefited Devaney's fledgling program more than Claridge.

Claridge, now a Lincoln dentist, led Devaney's first two teams to 19 victories in 22 games, including two in bowls. And he was a first-team All-Big Eight honoree both seasons.

He also was among the

FIELD GENERALS

Dennis Claridge	1961-63
Bob Churchich	1964-66
Jerry Tagge	1969-71
Dave Humm	1972-74
Vince Ferragamo	1975-76
Turner Gill	1980-83
Steve Taylor	1985-88
Gerry Gdowski	1987-89
Tommie Frazier	1992-95
Scott Frost	1996-97

Cornhuskers' first Academic All-Americans.

When he left Nebraska as a third-round draft pick of the Green Bay Packers in 1963, he was the Cornhuskers' all-time passing leader. His career statistics included 125-of-298 completions for 1,733 yards and eight touchdowns.

Claridge was a punter and, in those pre-two-platoon days, a defensive back. His pass interception set up the winning touchdown drive in the 36-34 victory against Miami in the 1962 Gotham Bowl. He also threw a second-quarter touchdown pass to Mike Eger and finished 9-of-14 passing for 146 yards.

The 1962 season was Claridge's best, statistically. He rushed for 370 yards and passed for 829 yards, setting school single-season records for pass completions (56) and points (64).

He scored 10 touchdowns and ran for a pair of two-point conversions and was the United Press International Big Eight Player of the Year.

Though his statistics weren't as impressive in 1963, his accomplishment was arguably greater, leading Nebraska to its first conference championship since 1940, when Biff Jones' team went to the Rose Bowl. NU's only blemish in 1963 was a 17-13 loss to Air Force at Lincoln.

Despite a 10-1 record that included its first Orange Bowl victory, however, Nebraska didn't climb into the *Associated Press* Top 10 until mid-November, the next-to-last week of the season.

The Cornhuskers moved up from No. 10 to No. 6 following a 29-20 victory in the final regular-season game against Oklahoma.

They were No. 6 in the final AP rankings because there were no polls after bowl games. They finished No. 5 in the UPI poll, the highest post-season ranking in school history.

To some extent, Nebraska's offense has come full-circle in recent seasons. Claridge was comparable physically to last season's quarterback, Scott Frost. He stood 6-foot-3, weighed 210 pounds, had "good speed" according to the Cornhusker media guide for 1963, and ran options.

In addition to posing a passing threat, he could tuck away the ball and run.

His most memorable run came on the Cornhuskers' second play from scrimmage in the 1964 Orange Bowl game. Before many in a crowd of

10 QUESTIONS

Huskers Illustrated talks with fullback JOEL MAKOVICKA

1 What's your least favorite class and why?

Chemistry 252 or 253. It's really hard, a lot of memorization; it's just real real complicated stuff. I got a B. (He has never received a grade lower than a B in college.)

2 Do you prefer VH1 or MTV?

MTV. I like the (program) "Love Line" and stuff like that. I like some of their other programs.

3 Who is your favorite TV personality?

Chris Farley and the way he would work himself into a lather. I've just enjoyed a lot of his movies, like "Black Sheep" and "Tommy Boy."

4 Best place to live — rural or city?

Rural. That's where I grew up. You have to go back to your roots. I like the slower pace. I wouldn't mind living in the city for a while, but eventually I'd probably go back to a rural area.

5 What's your favorite place to play besides Memorial Stadium?

I enjoyed playing at Arizona State (in 1996). Even though we got beat, it was a great experience. I also liked Washington. The fans there are really intense and into the game. Those were the two loudest places we've played. It was really fun to go out there and play.

6 Bill Clinton — effective leader or washed up?

Washed up! Impeach! He lied. He committed perjury. I don't think our president should commit perjury.

7 What's the best movie you've seen recently and why?

"Armageddon." I just thought it was really powerful; a powerful statement-type movie.

8 ESPN — essential or unnecessary?

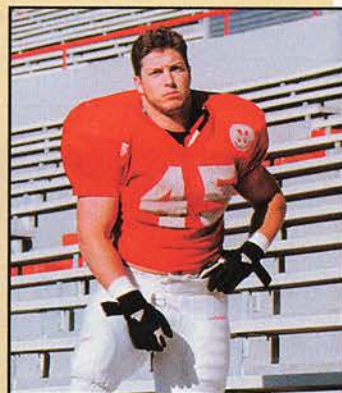
Essential when you're at home just laying around and watching TV. As far as listening to it, it's unnecessary. A lot of people put too much stock into listening to (Lee) Corso and a lot of those other guy's picks of who's going to win. It all comes out on the field.

9 What's your most embarrassing moment as a Nebraska player?

You can't just say he blew me up, but (linebacker) Jay Foreman hit me hard and knocked me off my feet. It probably happened when we were freshmen. It had to be Foreman. With him, you never hear the end of it. I still hear about it. It's the only time he's ever blown me up, and he still talks about it.

10 Who are the biggest trash-talkers on the Nebraska defense?

You have to single one out? The two worst by far and hands down are (rush end Mike) Rucker and Foreman. They're unbelievable. It's non-stop jabber. A play could run for 40 yards and they'll finally make a tackle and then they'll get up like they're All-Americans. They never stop. ■



Hey, Democrats, don't look to Makovicka for support if Congress begins impeachment proceedings against President Clinton.

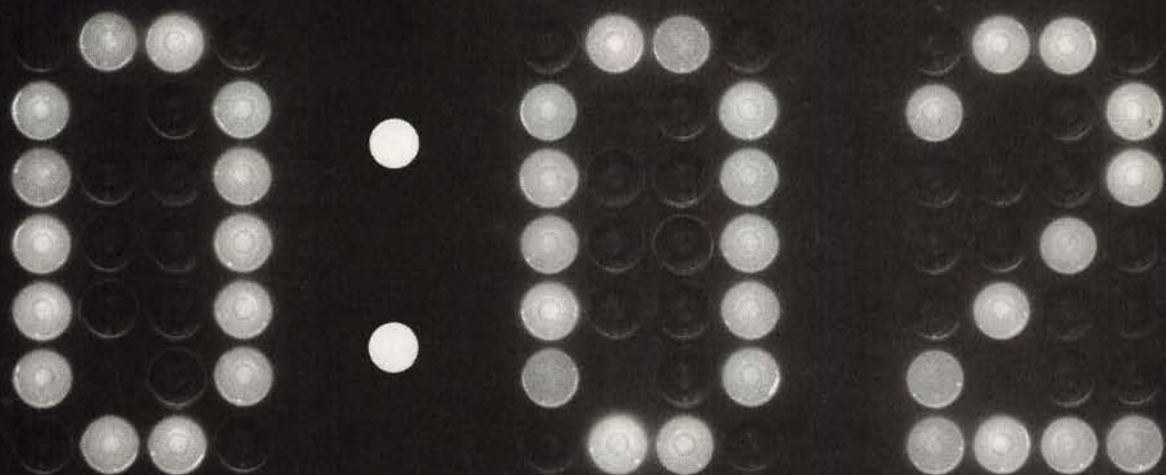
72,647 had settled into their seats, he raced down the sideline 68 yards for a touchdown. The run was the longest in Orange Bowl history at the time.

Nebraska wrapped up the second 10-victory season in school history with the 13-7 victory against fifth- and sixth-ranked Auburn — Walter "Bummy" Booth's 1903 Nebraska team finished 10-0-0.

Even though it is approaching 40

years since he played, and the game has changed dramatically, Claridge remains among the best quarterbacks ever to pull on a Cornhusker jersey.

His name has been pushed well down on the statistical lists. He ranks 13th in career passing at Nebraska, for example. But, as Devaney wrote in his 1981 autobiography, Claridge was "a fine quarterback, maybe the best I ever had." That is endorsement enough. ■



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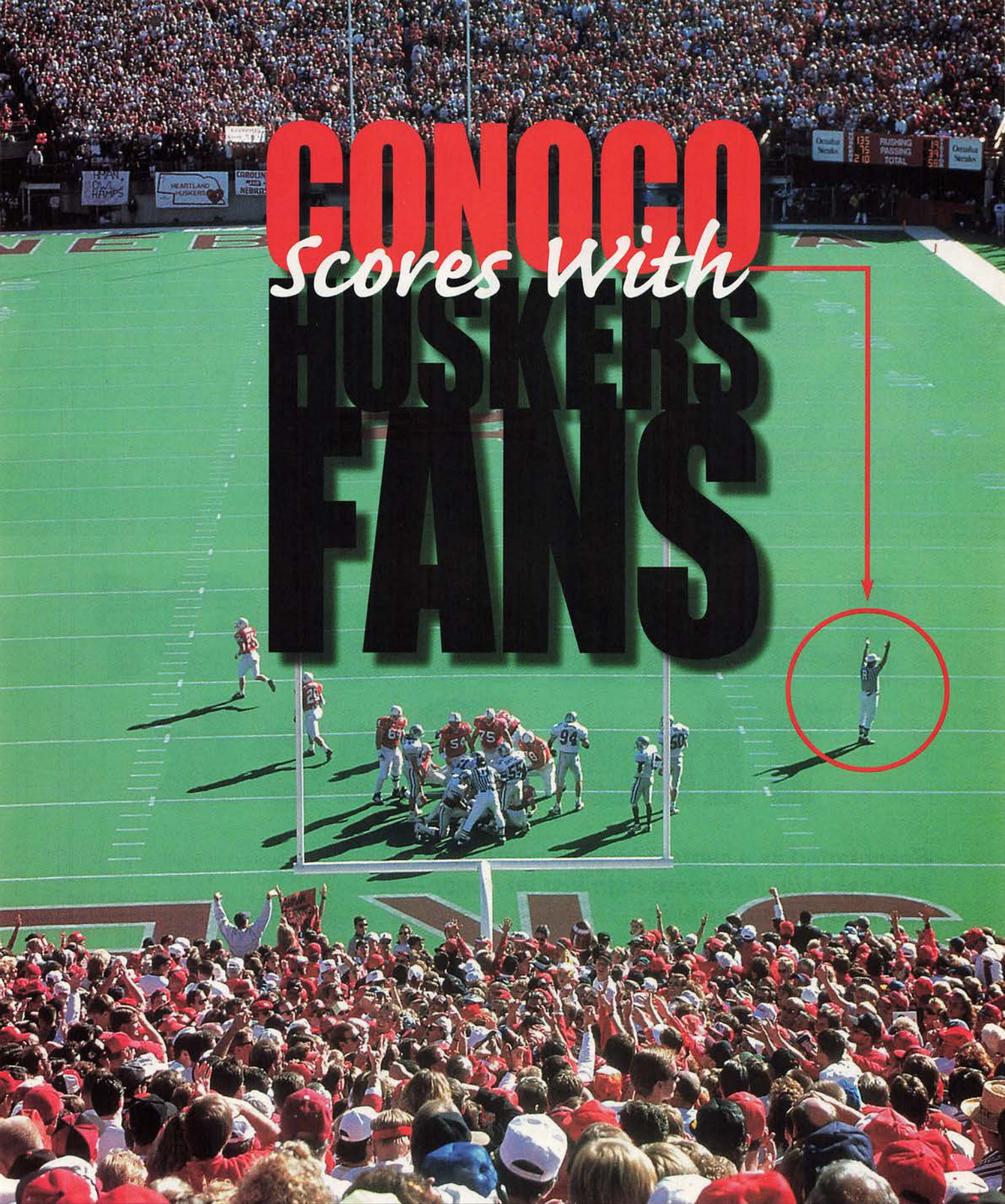
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Leaders Of The Pack

Being voted as a captain by your peers at Nebraska signifies more than just an honor — it also brings responsibility

SHELDON JACKSON WAS SURPRISED to be chosen as a Nebraska football captain.

"I never imagined it," the senior from Diamond Bar, Calif., said. "I was thinking more Josh Heskew and Joel Makovicka getting it (as offensive captains). Those are the guys I voted for."

As it turned out, Heskew and Makovicka were voted captains, as were Jay Foreman and Chad Kelsay from the defense, giving the Cornhuskers five for only the second time in history.

The 1995 national championship team also had five captains: Phil Ellis, Christian Peter, Mark Gilman, Aaron Graham and Tony Veland. Otherwise,

Nebraska has had four captains, two on offense and two on defense, over the last decade.

From Bob Devaney's arrival in 1962 through the 1982 season, the Cornhuskers had only two captains, one on offense and one on defense.

The number of captains varied between three or four from 1983 to 1987.

"Having been here for four-and-a-half-years, it means a lot," said Jackson, the third tight end in the last four seasons to be chosen as a captain. "It's an honor to be voted captain by your peers. I'm glad it was more so than that the coaches putting somebody in that position."

The honor comes with responsibility. "It makes a guy feel like he's a major part of this team, but he's also got to do things to keep this team on track," coach Frank Solich said.

Solich speaks from experience. He was Nebraska's offensive captain as a senior in 1965. Solich remembers leading by example more than by words.

"I didn't do a lot of talking," he said. "With my size, it's best not to be (too vocal). But I was certainly a driven guy, and that was probably noticed more so than maybe the loud speeches."

"Players look at work ethic. They look at what has happened over the last year, two years, three years, in the weight room, conditioning, how the players have been in terms of representing this program."

"There are a lot of things that go into choosing a captain. I think our guys have done a good job of it."

Chad Kelsay, Jay Foreman, Josh Heske and Sheldon Jackson walk out for the coin toss against Louisiana Tech.

Jackson, like Solich, expects to lead by actions more than by words.

"I'm not very vocal," he said after the captains were announced on the morning of Photo Day, the week before the opener. "Ask any one of these guys here. I'm the least vocal of all of them."

Makovicka agreed with Jackson's self-assessment. "I think it's safe to say Sheldon's the least vocal," he said. "But I'm not that vocal either, except at game time, I guess. I get really worked up. But as far as practice, I just go out and practice well."

Makovicka and Kelsay are native Nebraskans, from Ulysses and Auburn, respectively. Brainard also claims Makovicka, who played eight-man football at East Butler High School and then walked on at Nebraska, following in the footsteps of his brother, Jeff.

East Butler is located in Brainard, which the Cornhusker media guide lists as Makovicka's hometown even though he grew up on an acreage three miles from Ulysses. "I kind of get some guff from that because they

always say Brainard here (at Nebraska)," said the senior fullback. "Everybody from Ulysses says I'm from there, and everybody from Brainard says I'm from Brainard."

In any case, having grown up in the state makes being a captain even more special, according to Kelsay. "I think it just kind of exemplifies the dream, the Husker dream, to come up here and be a part of the Husker football team, and now to have something like this happen, it's wonderful," he said.

Auburn's population is much greater than the combined populations of Ulysses and Brainard. "But we're still both from very small communities here in Nebraska, and it really means a lot to be able to look at where you come from and just see how big football is in Nebraska," said Kelsay.

As with all of the captains, Kelsay assumed a leadership role last spring and over the summer. "With Grant (Wistrom) and Jason (Peter) graduating, somebody had to step up and be a little bit more vocal," he said. "I know there are three or four guys on our defense who have stepped up to do that. You can't have just a bunch of people and not one or two guys kind of telling them what they're supposed to be doing."

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Taking charge comes naturally for Foreman because of his position — middle linebacker.

"That's what you have to do," he said. "You have to get everybody set up. It's almost like a quarterback on defense, so I've had a leadership role for the last couple of years. It's not really a big change for me."

Being elected captain is "nothing you really can plan for," said Foreman. "But that was one of my goals as a freshman coming in. I felt as long as I worked hard and did what I had to do on the field, there was no reason why I shouldn't be (a captain)."

"With the work ethic, doing everything well on and off the field, I felt I had a good chance. But if I wasn't

named a captain, it wouldn't have changed my role on the team."

The same could be said of the others. "There are a lot of guys on this team who could be captains," Makovicka said. "I think every one of us could have been a great captain. It's just something where they had to single us out, four or five. So it wouldn't have been a disappointment."

Heskew, who is from Mustang, Okla., is the 16th offensive lineman in the last 17 seasons to be a captain.

"I'll tell you what, growing up, this is something I never thought would happen to me, that I'd be a captain on Nebraska's football team," he said. "This is a great honor. I'm very excited to have this opportunity to represent

my team like this."

Heskew, who was snubbed by Oklahoma out of high school, is among the most gregarious players on the team, making him a natural choice as a captain.

"I hope people realize I try to reach out for everybody, and if this is a way of showing me they understand what I've done, how I've helped out, I'm glad to step up and take this role."

All five captains are members of the unity council and have been active in leading the team.

"Any time we've had a team meeting or something like that, we always got up and talked and expressed our feelings to the coaches," Heskew said. "People come to us if they have problems, and we'll pass it along to either Jack Stark or the coaches. We've all been working together, getting this team in order. So it just seems kind of natural that this is it."

Leadership, particularly that of Wistrom and Jason Peter, was a significant element of last season's national championship team.

Wistrom had a "significant influence" on shaping Kelsay's attitude.

"When I came up here the summer before my freshman year, Grant was one of the first guys I met. He kind of took me under his wing and helped me through that first summer," said Kelsay.

"I just grew to be great friends with him. When you hang around a guy of his character and his skills, both athletically and (in) the leadership role he took, you can't help but let some of that rub off."

"You see what he does. You see how he carries himself on and off the field. I'm not saying I'm going to be the kind of leader Grant was, but I hope some of the things he did rubbed off on me."

Like Sheldon Jackson this year, Vershan Jackson and Aaron Taylor, Nebraska's offensive captains last season, were more laid back than Wistrom and Peter.

Even though his concern is the team, Jackson manages to maintain his individuality.

The day of the announcement, his fingernails were polished dark purple. Specifically, Jackson said, the color of the fingernail polish was eggplant.

Makovicka, who stood nearby, smiled. "He's out there," he said of Jackson.

"He may not be the vocal one, but he's way out there." ■



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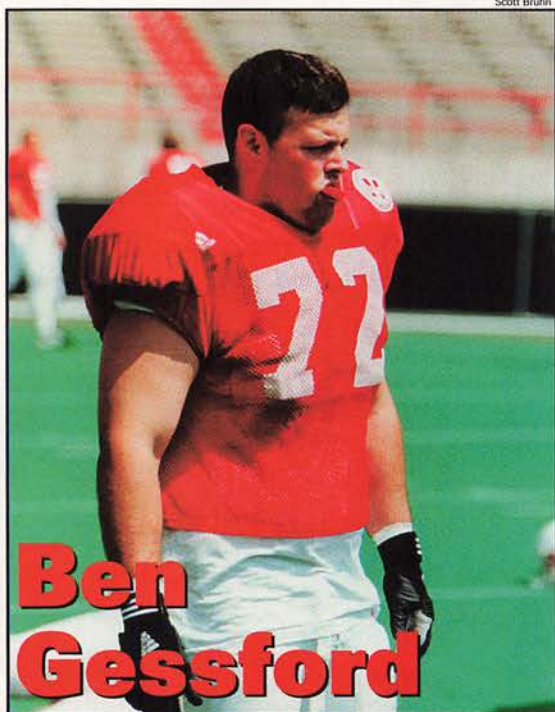
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PLAYER PROFILE



Ben Gessford played back the messages on the telephone answering machine at the apartment he shares with Nebraska football teammates Bill Lafleur and Joel Makovicka.

The first of several messages was for Lafleur.

Lafleur needed to sign papers so he could go on scholarship during second semester a year ago. One of the NCAA-maximum 85 scholarships had opened up because of a graduating senior.

"I was like, 'Oh man, he got a scholarship,'" said Gessford, who was pleased for his friend, but also a bit envious. Earning a scholarship is the dream of every walkon at Nebraska.

And Gessford, like Lafleur and Makovicka, had walked on.

Makovicka was already on scholarship, and now Lafleur was going to be on scholarship, too — for the spring semester at least. Whether or not he would be able to keep it in the fall depended on the number of players who signed letters of intent with the Cornhuskers in February as Lafleur's scholarship was renewable on a semester-by-semester basis.

Gessford considered his friend's good fortune as he listened to the remaining messages.

Several went by before he came to one intended for him: "Oh Ben, I

should have told you earlier," the voice said. "You have to come in and sign your scholarship papers, too."

He immediately called home to tell his parents. "I was pretty happy," he said.

The scholarship was a reward for four years of hard work. It was also a sign of respect.

"It's nothing but a confidence booster," Gessford said during two-a-day practices in August. "It's just hard when you're here and you're working three or four years, working your butt off, and you see other guys (on scholarship) who are kind of slacking. You want what they have."

"It's not so much that you get treated differently than anybody else. You get

treated the same. But in your mind, you feel like you're worth less than the guy who's getting school paid for. I think the scholarship signifies that the coaches believe in you and they have confidence in you."

When he finally got the scholarship, following his junior season, "it gave me confidence," he said. "It showed that the coaches do believe in me and I have a shot at playing."

"I don't know . . . for me, it had a lot to do with confidence."

Gessford has had more than a shot at playing as a senior. He is the starting offensive right guard, and because of his versatility, he also has provided some much-needed depth at tackle.

As with every walkon, Gessford is a survivor. He was not heavily recruited as an undersized offensive lineman at East High School in Lincoln, and he probably wouldn't have walked on had it not been for the efforts of his coach, John Gingery, and the encouragement of his parents, James and Judi.

His dad sent out letters to colleges and got back questionnaires.

Gingery sent out videotapes of Gessford. "He thought I was good enough to play college football," said Gessford, who weighed about 240 pounds as a high school senior. "That's why he ended up sticking with it. I think Coach Gingery probably hounded Nebraska to give me a shot."

Gessford's only scholarship offer came from the University of Nebraska-Kearney. It was after a visit there, on which he was accompanied by his dad, that he decided to walk on at Nebraska.

He didn't want to go to Nebraska-Kearney. "I kind of wanted to stay close to home," he said.

The Cornhuskers already had invited him to walk on after looking at the videotape Gingery had sent, so Gessford and his dad discussed the situation on the drive back from Kearney.

"We just kind of had a talk in the car about what I would do," Gessford said.

James Gessford understood the challenge his son would face as a walkon. He made the Kansas City Chiefs' opening day roster as a free agent after playing tight end at Hastings College. And though he was soon released by the Chiefs, he played in the World Football League in 1974 and 1975.

"He suggested I walk on and at least give it a try because, you know, you get the shot and you might as well take it," Ben said. "You can always decide you don't like it. But if you don't take the shot, you can't go back. You can't do it over. So I chose to walk on and see what happened."

"(My dad) left the decision up to me, but he helped. He laid it all down on the table for me, and it made a lot of sense, what he said about coming here and walking on, giving it a shot."

On any given day during his first couple of seasons at Nebraska, Gessford might not have said the decision was a good one. He had doubts and got discouraged more than once.

"It's just like a rollercoaster," said Gessford, who redshirted as a freshman in 1994 and paid his dues on the scout team. "You have your good times and your bad."

"When I look back on it, it seems like I remember a lot of the good stuff, but I remember a lot of the bad stuff, too."

"I'd say the absolute worst was my first spring, when I came in completely not prepared to run the offense. The speed is different. Every practice, you're trying to learn this complex offense. Your mind's going every which way. You've got coaches yelling at you, trying to make you better."

"I dreaded coming to practice. Every day was like, 'Gosh, why am I

doing this?"

Having a scholarship doesn't ensure surviving the battle of attrition. Half of the freshman scholarship recruits who arrived with Gessford in the fall of 1994 have since left the program.

"A lot of the guys I was initially friends with ended up not playing here," he said. "It's hard when you come in and you go through all the initial stuff with guys who become your friends and then they end up not making it. It's hard to see that and still stick it out."

Why wasn't he among those who dropped by the wayside? "I don't know," he said. "I just didn't want to let it beat me, I guess. The guys who did stick it out feed off each other and help each other."

Learning Nebraska's complex system takes time for most offensive linemen, and Gessford, who also needed to gain weight, was no exception.

It wasn't until the spring of 1996 that, "I had a pretty good idea of some of the calls," he said. "By my third spring ball, I had it pretty much down."

The scholarship Gessford was given last semester, like Lafleur's, was renewable. And because of the number of scholarship recruits Nebraska signed in February, he wouldn't have had a grant-in-aid this fall if incoming freshman DeAntae Grixby hadn't suffered a shoulder separation in the Shrine Bowl all-star game.

Grixby won't enroll full-time until the second semester, enabling Gessford to remain on scholarship.

The scholarship is nice, but Gessford no longer needs it for confidence. "All I want to do this season is go out, have fun and help the team in any way I can," he said. "When I look back on this season after it's over, I don't want to have any regrets about how hard I could have worked or that I could have done better."

Much has happened since he arrived in the fall of 1994.

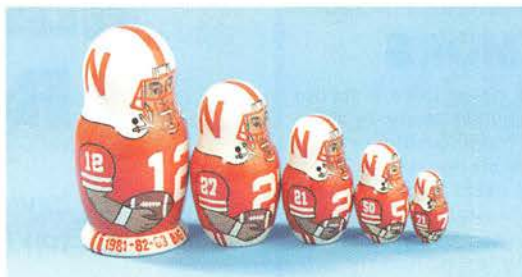
"I think everybody's naive when they first come in," Gessford said. "You think you're going to come in, and you don't realize how major of a situation you're getting yourself into. And then once you get here, you're overwhelmed by college. It's not just football. It's a whole new way of life."

"Some people adjust. Some people don't. That's why some stay and some leave."

Gessford is among the former. ■

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Wisconsin players draw attention

RUMORS

Nebraska has never been a school that recruited a player solely on stats. That's why it's not shocking to learn that the Huskers are looking at quarterback **Scot Austin** (6-foot-4, 210 pounds with 4.8 speed in the 40-yard dash) of Huntington Beach (Marina), Calif., despite the fact he isn't the prototype Husker quarterback.

Austin is taller, heavier and not as speedy as most Cornhusker signal-callers. A year ago he threw for just 673 yards and rushed for another 564, but he can bench well over 300 pounds and is poised for a banner year. Austin possess a strong arm and he runs like a fullback playing quarterback.

"I really like the way Nebraska plays football and I am the kind of guy that knows if I don't play quarterback, then maybe I can be a tight end or linebacker or something," said Austin. "I know I am a good football player and want to play for a great program, and right now nobody has a better program than Nebraska."

Colorado is the leader early, but Nebraska, Washington, Arizona, Pittsburgh and Oregon are all very much in the hunt.

The Cornhuskers are also looking very closely at inside linebacker **Mike Makris** (6-1, 235, 4.78) of Rhinelander, Wis. This is another player that is not your typical Husker defender, but Nebraska usually turns these type of defenders into defensive lineman and wins big with them.

Makris likes Wisconsin, Minnesota, Kansas, Northwestern, Illinois, Nebraska and Iowa.

Nebraska is also very much in the running for defensive back **Derek Abney** (5-10, 160, 4.5) of Schofield (Everest), Wis. A great cover corner, Abney is also a game-breaking receiver.

The Huskers' top competition may come from Kentucky because of family ties in the state. Notre Dame is also very well thought of, along with Purdue, Ohio State, Northwestern, Nebraska and Texas.

Kevin Maul (6-3, 180, 4.6) of Indianapolis (Arsenal Tech), Wis., also loves the Huskers early. Maul is an excellent strong safety type who loves to support the run. He is leaning towards Purdue, with Nebraska, Florida State and Florida in the hunt. Maul is another that has outside linebacker written all over him.

Finally linebacker **Jeff Mack** (6-1, 220, 4.64) of Madison (West) is another who is looking hard towards the Midlands. Mack camped at Michigan, Ohio State and Nebraska but also likes Wisconsin. ■

Huskers Look To Reload At RB

Already having received commitments from two of the nation's top backs, Nebraska doesn't plan to stop there

By James HALE

It seems like the University of Nebraska always has excellent running backs. When was the last time the Cornhuskers didn't have a prime time tailback in their offense? Granted, some of their running backs are better known than others. In fact, many of the Huskers' running backs became household names once they started at Nebraska.

The names of **Ahman Green**, **Calvin Jones**, **Derek Brown**, **Ken Clark**, **Keith Jones**, **Doug DuBose**, **Mike Rozier**, **Roger Craig**, **I.M. Hipp**, **Jarvis Redwine**, **Rick Berns** and **Jeff Kenney** are some of the top names among running backs in the history of college football. Hey, even the great **Johnny Rogers** lined up every once in a while at the fabled Husker I-back

spot.

Of course, Rogers won the Heisman Trophy based more on his merits as a wide receiver and an electrifying punt returner, while Rozier was the dominate football player in 1983.

Because of their great success at I-back, the Cornhuskers never have a problem attracting great running backs to Lincoln. In fact, most of the great backs in the country make themselves available to the Cornhuskers, allowing Nebraska to select the two or three who best fit their system. That's a luxury that comes when you are the dominant rushing football team in the country.

Already the Cornhuskers are off to a great start with a verbal commitment from **Josh Davis** (6-foot, 190 pounds, 4.39 seconds in the 40-yard dash) of Loveland, Colo., who was the first Cornhusker to commit back in the summer. We featured Davis in our preseason issue, and our thoughts of him haven't changed. He is one of the top running backs in the country.

We also haven't changed our mind about fullback **Judd Davies** (6-2, 230, 4.65) of Omaha (Millard North), Neb. He also committed back in the summer, and he's regarded as one of the top fullback prospects in the country.

In fact, it's the year of the running back in the Big 12, especially in Missouri, where there are several outstanding running back prospects. The best of the lot may be **Brian Lewis** (5-10, 195, 4.4) of Pattonville, Mo. Lewis is a prototype tailback who is a slasher with excellent power and strength. A year ago, Lewis

Millard North Connection

When the Huskers received a commitment from fullback **Judd Davies** (right), a 6-foot-2, 200-pound linebacker from Omaha (Millard North), it marked yet another Husker blue-chip recruit who emerged from that high school.

It is likely that once he arrives in Lincoln, Davies will take a handoff from another alumnus of Millard North, redshirt freshman quarterback, **Eric Crouch** (below, right).

Davies is largely regarded one of the top fullback prospects in the nation and is believed to be the top prospect in the state of Nebraska. He was one of the top performers at the Huskers' summer camp this past summer.

In addition to Crouch, freshman rover **Mic Boettner** and freshman walk-on offensive lineman **Joe Freeman** are two other Husker players who attended Millard North High School.

Of the 110 players on the Cornhusker roster who are from the state of Nebraska, 19 are from Omaha — the most of any city in Nebraska. ■



rushed for 1,500 yards and 31 touchdowns. This past summer, he attended the Missouri football camp.

Every school in the world is recruiting Lewis, and he's still looking at several different colleges, with Nebraska right in the mix.

"What running back in their right mind wouldn't consider Nebraska," said Lewis. "Nebraska is the most dominant running team in the country, and their tailbacks are always regarded as the very best. Just to be recruited by them is a great honor, and I will certainly consider them."

Missouri is the early leader with Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado and Tennessee also in the hunt.

Jamar Mozee (5-10 1/2, 206, 4.45) of Blue Springs, Mo., is rated on the same level as Lewis and brings in better stats with 2,300 yards rushing (7.6 yards per carry) and 26 touchdowns. Ten schools have already offered Mozee, and he's looking at Missouri, Kansas, Iowa State, UCLA, Kansas State, Miami, Nebraska, OU and Oklahoma State.

Lee Thompson (5-9, 205, 4.5) of Liberty, Mo., is another great running back out of the Show Me State. Thompson rushed for 2,047 and 30 touchdowns. Thompson camped at Iowa, and the Hawkeyes are in the picture with Nebraska, Michigan, Missouri, Texas A&M, Wyoming, Tennessee and Colorado.

Cedric Cobbs (6-1, 217, 4.4) of Little Rock (Fair), Ark., is a great one who is drawing tremendous attention nationwide after rushing for 1,723 yards at 11.8 yards per carry and 16 touchdowns. A great combination of power and speed, Cobbs has the ability to make people miss as well.

"I hope people look at me as a complete running back," said Cobbs. "I think I can run over people, make them miss, outrun them. I would like to think that I am the type of back that always moves the chains."

Arkansas has already offered and wants to keep this prize in-state, while Michigan, Florida State, Missouri, Texas A&M, Texas, Georgia and Nebraska are also calling.

As always, Texas is loaded with great running backs, and Nebraska is right in the mix with several of them.

Reggie Duncan (5-9, 200, 4.5) of Killen (Ellison), Texas is a fluid runner that defenders can't seem to get their hands on. Duncan was slip-

REP REPORT

Keeping Up With COLBY FREEMAN

WE HAVE REALLY GOTTEN off to a good start this season. We had a scrimmage before we started the season, and we did very well in that.

This past weekend we played our first game. We were one of the early games that got started on Aug. 28. We played San Angelo Central, and we won, 48-31. It went really well. Our offense was very good. Our offensive line did some unbelievable things. We had 580 total yards of offense and 520 was rushing.

I had 287 yards rushing, mostly off down the line and speed options. I scrambled a couple of times off sprint-out passes, but that didn't get a lot of yardage.

Our first game was an incredible thing to go through. Everything that has built up for this season really has the town excited. Friday morning we had a pep rally, and everybody in the school was real excited. You could tell that everybody was ready for the game. We had a lot of community support there.

The tradition around Brownwood makes football very special. There have been seven state championships won here. Legendary coach Gordon Wood won seven state titles and the alumni here all come back for the games. When you put on the Maroon and White, it's something to be proud of. You know you are not just representing yourself, but everybody who has worn it before you.

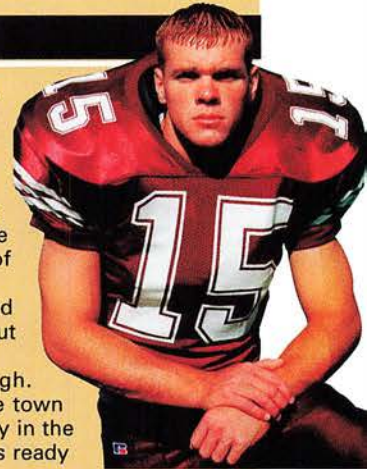
I have thought about this being my final season with my dad quite a bit. Nobody is working harder than my dad to try to win a state championship. In fact, he's gone right now (6:30 Sunday night) working. He's been at the office since about 1:00 p.m. It's something special to be able to come home and see the guy who has coached you all day. Some people may think it's tough, but it's nothing but special to me, and it will be that much more special if we get the chance to win it all for him. He wants to win this so bad for us and that's why he is such a great coach. It's not just me, but all the guys who want to go out and win a state championship so my dad can get a ring.

Nothing is really going on in recruiting. Including myself, there are three players on our team who are being recruited. The other two are defensive end Jason Barron and linebacker Jared Morris. Jason has already committed to Texas. Jared and I are the same in that we aren't sure where we want to go. Jason and I went to the Texas and Nebraska camp this summer, while Jared went to the Texas, Texas A&M and Nebraska camps.

My dad wrote a letter to all the coaches requesting that they hold off phone calls until after the season. I don't know how that is going to work, if the college coaches are going to respect that or not. Texas A&M's coach R.C. Slocum said if he was a high school coach he would do the same thing. I really don't want to be on the phone for 45 minutes being told how good a college is while we have our season going on. I hope everybody can understand that. I want to win so badly during my senior season that I just don't want to worry about anything else. ■ —

As told to James Hale

Throughout the 1998 football season, Huskers Illustrated will chronicle the recruiting process of Brownwood quarterback Colby Freeman, one of the top prospects in Texas.



**Colby
FREEMAN**

pery enough to rush for 2,400 yards and 20 touchdowns last season. He can bench 415 pounds, squat 550, has a vertical jump of 30 inches and he ran a 10.6 100 meters in track. Early on, Duncan says he's looking at OU,

Nebraska, Texas A&M, LSU, Texas and Ole Miss (camp).

"Nebraska has an incredible program, especially if you are a running back," said Duncan. "Nebraska always features their tailbacks, and I would love to play in that offense."

Tyrone Richardson (6-3, 240, 4.6) of Clarksville, Texas, may be more of a fullback; then again, he may be a bruising big tailback. However you line him up, Richardson can run, a fact that was proven last season when he rushed for 1,450 yards and 20 touchdowns. He also averages 17 points and 10 rebounds a game

Early Birds

These players have given Nebraska verbal non-binding commitments.

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	40	High School
Josh Davis	TB	6-0	194	4.4	Loveland, Colo.
Rob Blomeier	QB/DB	6-0	194	4.5	Lancaster (Manheim Township), Pa.
Judd Davies	FB	6-1	238	4.7	Omaha (Millard North), Neb.
Taylor Gehman	FS	6-0	190	4.5	Omaha (Northwest), Neb.
Chris Loos	OL	6-3	275	5.4	Lincoln (Southeast), Neb.
Phil Peetz	DT	6-2	250	4.9	Elkhorn, Neb.

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in basketball. Richardson went to the Longhorn camp and has Texas on his list with Florida State, which he favors, followed by Notre Dame, Michigan and Nebraska.

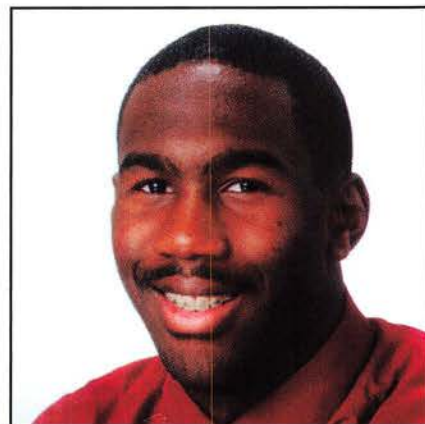
Shaud Williams (5-8, 180, 4.4) of Andrews, Texas, is a four-year starter who has already rushed for 5,346 career yards and 53 touchdowns. He rushed for 2,460 of those yards alone last season. Williams is considering Notre Dame, Michigan, Nebraska, Texas A&M, Texas Tech, Texas and Florida State.

Kenny Hayter (6-0, 205, 4.42) of Cypress Falls, Texas, is another favorite among those in the Southwest. Hayter rushed for 2,148 yards and 26 touchdowns and runs and 10.6 100 meters. A very elusive runner, Hayter is looking at LSU (camp), Nebraska, Florida State, Miami and Michigan.

Oschlor Flemming (5-11, 195, 4.5) of Denton (Ryan), Texas, has one of the great names in prep football. He also has great talent, rushing for 1,264 yards a season ago. Flemming also returned four kickoffs for scores, including a long of 97. OU, Nebraska, Texas A&M and Texas are his top four choices.

The very best running back in the country is **Nick Maddox** (6-0, 190, 4.45) of Kannapolis (Brown), N.C. Whatever attributes you can mention about a running back, throw them in for Maddox. He has all the tools, all the ability and a great future ahead of him after rushing for 2,346 yards and 45 touchdowns last season.

Before Mack Brown left North Carolina for Texas, Maddox was all set to become a Tar Heel. Now, he's wide open concerning his recruiting with North Carolina (camp), Florida State (camp), Nebraska, Notre Dame, Florida, Duke and Penn State all in the



In addition to having a unique name, Oschlor Flemming of Denton (Ryan) Texas, has unique talent.

hunt.

"I want to go to a school that is always using the run as it's main weapon on offense," said Maddox. "All the schools I am considering have a great reputation for their tailbacks and how they use them."

Daniel Davis (6-0, 200, 4.3) of Stafford (Brooke Point), Va., is rated right there with Maddox. When he runs, it doesn't even seem as if he's moving, but nobody catches him and he just seems to run away from everybody, rushing for 1,500 yards and 20 touchdowns in just nine games last season. He's run a 10.5 100 meters and likes Florida State, Nebraska, Ohio State, Penn State (camp), North Carolina (camp) and Michigan.

If you get a chance to see **William Green** (6-1, 220, 4.34) of Absecon (Holy Spirit), N.J., you won't believe your eyes. He's built better than most body building champions, yet he runs like a sprinter. Green set a new AAU powerlifting record in the 220-pound division when he benched 375 and squat 610. Green has better tools than most and is working to develop his instincts while rushing for 1,100 yards and 17 touchdowns last season.

Everybody in the country wants this great physical specimen, but early it's North Carolina, Penn State, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Florida State and Florida.

Kelton Lindsay (6-1, 190, 4.4) of Lebanon, Ohio, has been proving that he is one of the best in the country since his sophomore year when he rushed for 1,462 yards. He backed that up with a 2,194-yard effort while scoring 41 touchdowns and leading his squad to a 21-1 record last season. Lindsay has 10.5 speed and is looking at Nebraska, Michigan State, Michigan and Notre Dame.

Santonio Beard (6-0, 195, 4.45) of Nashville (Pearl-Cohn), Tenn., ripped through opposing defenses for 2,165 yards and 31 touchdowns a year ago. Grades are a question, but Tennessee, Alabama, Arkansas, Texas, Nebraska and Florida State are still keeping tabs.

In California, **Charles Drake** (6-1, 175, 4.28) of Los Angeles (Westchester) has raised eyebrows with his amazing speed. Drake has been clocked at 4.25 in the 40-yard dash and has a 35-inch vertical jump. A year ago, he rushed for 1,300 yards and 17 touchdowns. Drake possesses great moves in the open field. Currently, Nebraska is in the lead, ahead of BYU, Auburn and USC. ■

CAMPUS LIFE

As Seen Through The Eyes Of Dan Alexander

NEBRASKA I-BACK Dan Alexander hopes opposing defenders do a double-take when they check the scouting report and see his size.

A 6-foot, 255-pound I-back?

"I consider myself a nice guy," said Alexander, a third-year sophomore from Wentzville, Mo. "But football is a mental game, and if they're out there thinking about my size, it gives me an edge. That's what I strive for."

Those who follow Nebraska football closely know the book on Alexander: His speed (4.52 seconds in the 40-yard dash); his athleticism (top overall scores in the team's physical testing); his amazingly chiseled frame (5-percent body fat); and his potential (unrealized).

Alexander has been consistently phenomenal in the weight room and when performing physical tests. This season, he hopes to transfer that success to games and, in the long haul, become a consistent contributor.

"I really want to prove myself out there on the field," he said.

Alexander is expected to see his share of playing time the entire season behind Correll Buckhalter and DeAngelo Evans. That is if Evans recovers fully from minor knee surgery that will keep him sidelined for the first three games.

"I've been waiting 20 years; all the preparation will pay off," Alexander said. "It's good to come in games and feel ready."

Entering the season, Alexander was anxious to show what he could do when healthy. Although he played last season, rushing 16 times for 73 yards, he was slowed by the after-effects of major knee surgery in May of 1997.

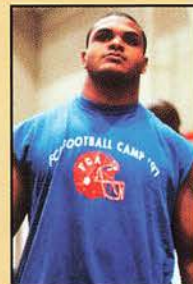
Alexander underwent an operation to repair a torn ligament in his left knee. The injury, suffered during the annual Red-White Spring Scrimmage, occurred after what had been a promising spring season for Alexander.

"I didn't feel 100 percent until January, after last season ended," he said. "Then, during spring practice, I felt some tension because I was no longer wearing a brace. Now, my knee feels fine, and I'm running with confidence again."

Alexander likes getting an opportunity to be in the game for more than a few plays at a time.

"You really can't find your feet or perform to the best of your ability until you've been in the game a while," he said. "With just a couple plays at a time, you really don't find your consistency."

"I have confidence in my ability," he added. "I've never doubted it. I just want to go out there and be a good football player. A player just wants to contribute any way he can." ■ — *As told to Steve Sipple*



Dan ALEXANDER

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Air Nebraska?

Just because Solich has shown the willingness to throw the ball in key situations, don't think he's forgotten his ground rules



Mike BABCOCK

THIS IS THE new Nebraska. "Send the message throughout the country," senior tight end Sheldon Jackson said after the Cornhuskers' 38-7 victory against Alabama-Birmingham.

"I think Coach (Frank) Solich sent a message to the team: He's willing to make plays. If it's third-and-short, fourth-and-short, we might not necessarily run the ball.

"We have the ability to throw the ball.

And we will."

Nebraska threw 13 passes against Louisiana Tech, completing 10 for 173 yards and one touchdown, and 21 passes against Alabama-Birmingham, completing 15 for 208 yards and two touchdowns. But the Cornhuskers have almost always been that efficient. Jackson meant something else.

He wasn't referring so much to the number of passes or the productivity. The basis for what he took to be a significant shift in Nebraska's offensive philosophy was a single play.

Late in the first quarter of the Alabama-Birmingham game, the Cornhuskers took possession at their 29-yard line, leading 7-0. Under the direction of redshirt freshman quarterback Eric Crouch, Nebraska drove to the Alabama-Birmingham 15-yard line on 12 plays, four of which were passes.

- The first, which initiated the series, went to split end Billy Haafke for 6 yards.
- The second, also on a first down, was incomplete.
- The third, still another on first down, was good for 7 yards to Jackson.
- And the fourth, on third-and-11, went to I-back Correll Buckhalter for 10 yards.

Buckhalter, Nebraska's leading rusher for the second game in a row (96 yards on 19 carries), was stopped at the 15-yard line, leaving the Cornhuskers one yard short of a first down.

As Nebraska broke the huddle and went to the line of scrimmage, Crouch was preparing himself for a running play. After all, that's what the Cornhuskers have always done best.

At crunch time, they run the ball, muscling their way to the needed yardage.

This time was different, however.

Before he reached the center, Crouch heard his team-

mates calling a pass.

So he called a time out. "I wanted to make sure," he told reporters afterward. "Sometimes in different formations, you've got three or four guys running in and telling you the play.

"Someone said 46 iso pass, so I thought: 'We've got to get this straightened out.'

"After the time out was called, I ran over to see what Coach Solich was saying. I just had to make sure, being a young quarterback and being inexperienced. I just wanted to do the right things."

Crouch was skeptical about a pass play having been called.

"I don't think any team is going to think, maybe, we're going to pass it on fourth-and-1, considering our running game and the I-backs we've got, the fullbacks we have," he said.

Nebraska faced two third-and-short situations during the drive, and both times they picked up first downs with running plays — a 4-yarder by Joel Makovicka and a 2-yarder by Buckhalter.

That's what the Alabama-Birmingham defense expected. But Solich proved to be unpredictable.

Crouch faked a handoff to Buckhalter, and "everybody thought he had the ball, so that let Sheldon get open," said Crouch. "I think the wingback might have

been open, too. But I took my first read, saw Sheldon in the end zone, and thought the heck with the first down, let's go for the touchdown."

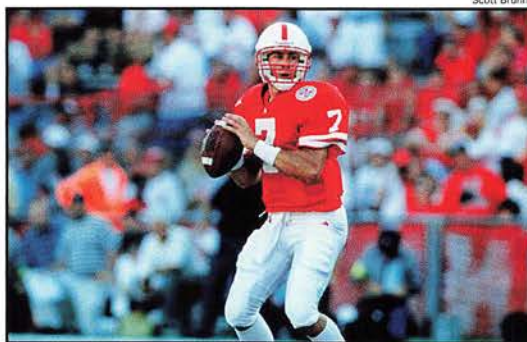
Crouch's pass was on the money, and Nebraska had six points.

The willingness to throw on fourth-and-1 doesn't indicate that Nebraska's offense will become "Air Solich," however. It's not that much different than it was under Tom Osborne.

"I think we're doing a lot of things the same," Crouch said.

"It's just, whenever you get a team that has a lot of big guys up front, a lot of guys that are going to take away your inside plays, then you have to go with more outside options, more play-action passes."

And that's what the Cornhuskers faced. "I was really waiting for the right time. And it seemed like the right time," said Solich. "But if it didn't work, then it wouldn't have been the right time." ■



Against Alabama-Birmingham, Eric Crouch and the Cornhuskers showed that they were able to effectively use the pass to gain field position.

Scott Bruhn



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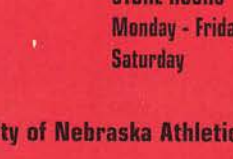
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